



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Helping to control your blood pressure

Information for patients, relatives and carers

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Why should I control my blood pressure?

Raised blood pressure is a risk factor in many conditions e.g. heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.

Controlling your blood pressure could reduce the risk of suffering from these health problems. Changing your diet and lifestyle are important features in reducing the risks.

What factors of my diet may affect my blood pressure?

- Your body weights
- Salt
- Fruit and vegetables
- Calcium
- Omega 3 fatty acids
- Alcohol

A diet that emphasises fruits, vegetables, low fat dairy products and wholegrain foods; and that is low in salt, fat and sugar, has been shown to reduce blood pressure.

These dietary factors should all be considered within a balanced diet to have the greatest effect on improving your blood pressure.

Eating a healthy diet

- Whatever changes you make to your diet it is still important to make sure that you include the right balance of foods and drinks.
- Aim to eat a wide variety of foods to ensure you get all the nutrients your body needs.
- Eat three regular meals per day.
- Base meals around carbohydrate foods – breads, cereals, rice, pasta, or potatoes. Choose wholegrain options of these foods.
- Foods that contain protein are needed for repair and replacement of body tissues. Most of us eat more protein than we actually need. Aim to have a small portion of meat, fish, egg or pulses at two meals each day.
- Milk and milk products provide protein, calcium and some vitamins. Choose low fat options where possible.
- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day. They give us fibre, and a range of vitamins and minerals.

Are you a healthy weight?

It is not good for your health to be either overweight or underweight.

If your body weight is low or if you are losing weight without trying you may not be getting enough of all the nutrients that your body requires. If this is the case, please ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian.

If you are overweight, you are more likely to suffer from high blood pressure. So, lifestyle alterations may be needed to help you to reduce your weight.

If you are overweight

Weight loss should be steady and slow – aiming for one to two pounds per week.

Try to make the following changes to your diet:

- Avoid fried foods
- Use semi skimmed or skimmed milk
- Cut down on cakes, pastries, and biscuits
- Cut down on sweets and chocolates
- Use diet or no added sugar drinks
- Don't add sugar to tea and coffee
- Cut the fat off meat and take the skin off chicken
- Have smaller portion sizes
- Eat slowly and chew the food well
- Don't miss meals – avoid becoming too hungry and have fruit in between meals if necessary
- Aim to have three meals per day
- Drink alcohol in moderation
(see alcohol intake guidelines in this booklet)

Salt and your health

Eating too much salt has been linked with having high blood pressure. Cutting down the amount of salt you eat by a fairly small amount can help.

What's the daily limit?

The average daily salt intake in the UK is currently 8.1g (grams) per day (one and a half teaspoons). It is recommended that we consume no more than 6g of salt a day (one teaspoon).

Where does salt come from?

You don't have to add salt to food to be eating too much. The salt that occurs naturally in fresh foods is enough to provide the small amount of salt that your body needs. About three quarters of the salt we eat is hidden in processed foods. Manufacturers add salt to food as a preservative and flavour enhancer. These foods don't necessarily taste salty and it is therefore important to look at the food labels to help you make lower salt choices.

What about salt substitutes?

We do not recommend that you use a salt substitute. Salt substitutes are made from a mixture of potassium chloride and sodium chloride and using them in place of salt will not help your taste to adjust to a lower salt intake.

Reducing your salt intake

Not adding salt to foods is a small, but important, part of reducing your salt intake to help you get used to a less salty taste. Cutting down on processed foods can also make a big difference to your intake.

High salt food choices

The following foods are almost always high in salt. Eat them less often or have smaller amounts:

- Anchovies
- Bacon
- Gravy granules
- Ham
- Olives
- Packet soups and noodles
- Pickles
- Prawns
- Processed and tinned meats
- Processed cheese and cheese spreads
- Salami and chorizo
- Salted and dry roast nuts
- Salt fish
- Smoked meat and fish
- Soy sauce and bouillon
- Stock cubes
- Yeast extract and Marmite

Foods to check for the salt content

The salt content of the following foods can vary between brands. Using foods labels will help you to choose the brand or variety that is lower in salt.

- Baked beans
- Bread and bread products e.g. crumpets, bagels, pittas, and tortilla wraps
- Breakfast cereals e.g. Cornflakes, Cheerio's, Rice Krispies, Branflakes, Fruit and Fibre
- Cakes and biscuits
- Cheese (only have small quantities of hard cheeses – up to 2 - 4oz per week)
- Crisps, corn, and potato snacks
- Condiments e.g. tomato ketchup, salad cream, mayonnaise, brown sauce, ready-made mustard, chutney, relish
- Filled pasta, tinned pasta
- Pasta sauces
- Pastries – both sweet and savoury
- Pizza
- Potato products e.g. chips (if salt added), instant mash, potato croquettes
- Ready meals
- Soups – tinned and fresh
- Sandwiches
- Sausages and burgers

Low salt food choices

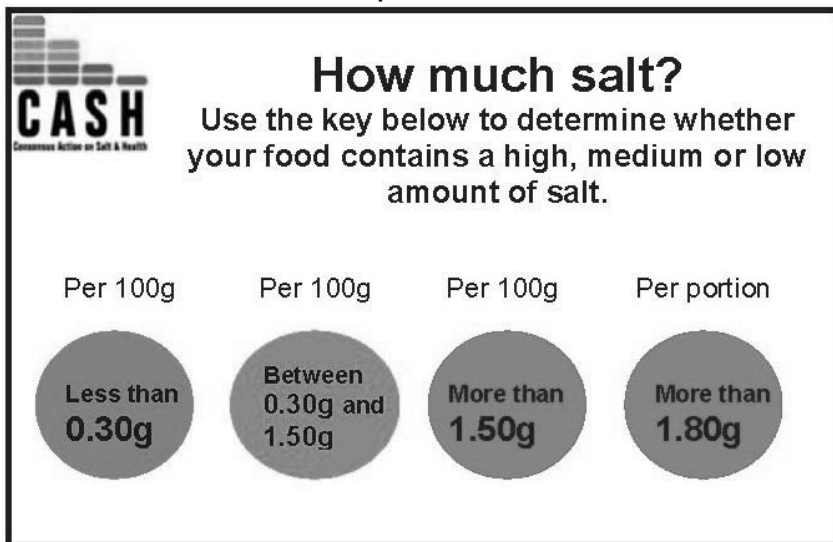
Fifteen percent of the salt we eat is naturally present in fresh foods. Choosing fresh unprocessed foods and cooking from scratch, where possible, is ideal. The following foods can be included within a healthy low salt diet.

- Fresh meat e.g. beef, pork, lamb, chicken, turkey
- (This includes fresh meat that has been frozen)
- Fresh/frozen or tinned fish e.g. cod, plaice, trout, salmon, haddock
- Eggs, pulses (tinned in unsalted water) and lentils
- Potatoes, rice, pasta, and unsalted crackers and crispbread
- The lowest salt cereals are Shredded Wheat, puffed wheat, Sugar Puffs, Weetabix, Porridge and Weetaflakes
- Fruit and vegetables – fresh, frozen, juiced or tinned without salt
- Milk and yoghurt
- Cottage cheese has half the salt content of hard cheese
- Cream cheese, Ricotta cheese, Quark
- Herbs, spices, pepper, vinegar, garlic, mustard powder
- Home-made soups using low salt stocks
- Low salt yeast extract, gravy browning or stock cubes
- Unsalted crisps and nuts

Reading the labels

Nutrition labels are usually found on the back or the side of food packaging. The full nutritional information is provided per 100g of the product. Sometimes they also tell you the information per serving or per pack.

Some foods now have the nutritional information displayed on the front of the packaging. This is usually given per portion, be aware that the serving on the pack may be different to the amount that you plan to eat. Some products combine colour coding with the nutritional information. Colour coded labelling makes it easy to see at a glance if a product is high (red), medium (amber) or low (green) in certain nutrients including salt. Aim to mainly choose products where salt is coded green, have amber products occasionally and limit the number of red products.



CASH
Consensus Action on Salt & Health

How much salt?

Use the key below to determine whether your food contains a high, medium or low amount of salt.

Per 100g	Per 100g	Per 100g	Per portion
Less than 0.30g	Between 0.30g and 1.50g	More than 1.50g	More than 1.80g

Source: Consensus Action on Salt and Health

Won't my meals taste bland?

Salt is an acquired taste and your taste buds can be retrained after a fairly short time. Many people find that foods are a little bland when they first stop adding salt, as they have grown used to a salty flavour. However, your palate will change, and you might even find that meals are nicer.

Tips for adding flavour in place of salt

- Add a splash of malt vinegar to vegetables
- Use balsamic, cider or rice vinegars on salads
- Add fresh ginger, garlic, chilli and spring onions
- Add red wine when cooking stews or casseroles
- Roast carrots and parsnips with cinnamon, mixed spice or nutmeg and a drizzle of honey
- Boil potatoes with an onion or mint
- Use an infused olive oil, e.g. garlic, basil, chilli or rosemary to sauté vegetables or as part of a salad dressing
- Use lemongrass, fresh coriander and a little sesame oil to flavour stir fries instead of soy sauce
- Frozen, dried, or chopped fresh herbs e.g. basil, oregano, tarragon, parsley, coriander, mint
- Freshly ground black pepper, curry powder, cumin, cayenne pepper, chilli powder, ground ginger and ground coriander

Marinating food prior to cooking enhances the flavour

- Honey, ginger, garlic, and olive oil - great for chicken or pork
- Ginger, coriander, lime rind and juice - great for lamb or fish
- Black pepper, chilli, and vegetable oil - great for beef
- Paprika, garlic, lemon juice and vegetable oil - great for chicken kebabs
- Chopped fresh dill, olive oil and lemon juice - great for fish

Add a squeeze of citrus

- Squeeze a dash of lemon or lime juice over your food instead of salt
- Drizzle olive oil, lemon juice and black pepper over salads or boiled new potatoes
- Add a dash of lemon juice and some chopped fresh mint on peas or green beans
- Squeeze lime juice over stir fries, curries, roast lamb, or other lamb dishes
- Add pieces of orange or apple to salads
- When roasting a chicken, add lemon juice instead of salt to crisp the skin
- Add grated zest of lemon or lime to curries
- Add lemon or orange slices to casseroles

Enjoy the real flavours of food using the above ideas

Fruit and vegetables

Eating more fruit and vegetables has been shown to have a good effect on your blood pressure. Aim to eat at least five portions of fruits and vegetables per day.

But what is a portion?

- 3oz (80g) of a fruit or vegetable = one portion
- One medium apple or pear
- One medium banana
- Seven strawberries
- Two halves of canned peaches
- Three dried apricots
- Handful of grapes
- One medium glass of orange juice
(only one glass per day can be counted as a portion)
- Two satsumas or plums
- Handful of vegetable sticks
- Two florets of broccoli or cauliflower
- Three heaped tablespoons of peas or sweetcorn
- Seven cherry tomatoes
- Cereal bowl of mixed salad

Ways to include fruit and vegetables in your diet

- Add chopped fruit to cereal
- Include salad in your sandwiches
- Add vegetables into minced meat to make bolognaise
- Add vegetables to stews, casseroles and curries
- Take a small box of raisins with your packed lunch
- Have a glass of fruit juice
- Have a homemade vegetable soup as a light meal
- Have vegetable sticks with low fat dips
- Puree fruit to use as a sauce with other fruits
- Have apple sauce with pork

If using tinned vegetables try and use those that are tinned in water, not brine.

Calcium

There is some evidence to suggest that including low fat calcium rich foods into a balanced diet may help to reduce blood pressure.

Have two to three servings per day:

- One small pot (125g) of diet or light yogurt
- Three heaped tablespoons of low fat fromage frais
- Cereal with skimmed or semi skimmed milk at breakfast (150ml)
- A serving of milk pudding
- Three heaped tablespoons fat free quark
- Two tablespoons (80g) cottage cheese
- Be careful not to use too much cheese (2-4oz per week maximum) as it is very salty

Changing the type and amounts of other fats in your diet

Reducing the overall amount of fat can help you to lose weight. However, changing the type of fat in your diet can help to look after your heart and blood vessels.

It is important to reduce the overall amount of fat you eat but also to replace some of the saturated fat with polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fat.

Saturated fats

The higher your intake of saturated fat the higher your cholesterol is likely to be, which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Saturated fats come mainly from animal sources, such as fatty meats, and are also included in butter, cheese, pastry, cakes, and biscuits.

Polyunsaturated fats

Polyunsaturated fats are found in vegetable oil products (i.e. sunflower, safflower, soya, and corn).

Monounsaturated fats

Monounsaturated fats are found in olive-based products, rapeseed oil, avocado, nuts and seeds.

How can I increase the amount of omega 3 fatty acids in my diet?

Increasing the amount of omega 3 fatty acids in your diet has been found to help reduce your blood pressure.

Where can Omega 3 fatty acids be found?

- Oily fish – very good low salt sources are herring, mackerel, pilchards, salmon, sardines, fresh tuna or trout. Remember that smoked and cured fish is high in salt
- Rapeseed oil (canola oil)

How much Omega 3 do I need to eat?

- Aim for one serving of oily fish and one serving of white fish per week
- A serving is roughly 100g (4oz) of fresh or frozen fish or one small or half a medium or a third of a large tin of canned fish

How to include fish in your diet

Fish is a very useful food and can be used in many ways.

- In sandwiches e.g. tuna or salmon
- On toast e.g. sardines in tomato sauce
- In jacket potatoes e.g. tuna and sweetcorn
- With salad e.g. salmon or tuna
- With parsley sauce e.g. cod
- Barbecued e.g. salmon, herring, trout
- Grilled whole fish or fish fillets

If you don't like fish, why not try it as part of a dish that has other flavours:

- With potato in a fish pie
- Fish cakes e.g. salmon, trout, or tuna
- With pasta in a bake
- Try adding herbs, spices, pepper, lemon juice, garlic, mustard, or chilli

Alcohol

Both men and women are advised to avoid having more than fourteen units of alcohol per week, to keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level.

If you do drink as much as fourteen units per week, it is best to spread this evenly over three days or more.

If you wish to cut down the amount you're drinking, a good way to help achieve this is to have several alcohol free days each week.

How many units do drinks contain?

- 125ml of 12% wine = 1.5 units
- 175ml of 12% wine = 2 units
- 250ml of 12% wine = 3 units
- Pint of lower strength lager/beer/cider (3.6%) = 2 units
- Pint of stronger lager/beer/cider (5.2%) = 3 units
- Can of lager/beer/cider (440ml 5%) = 2 units
- Single measure/25ml of spirit (40%) = 1 unit

Please note drinks with higher % alcohol will contain more units of alcohol

What if I have a poor appetite or have been used to eating a lot of salty foods?

It is always important to maintain a good nutritional intake and to stay well nourished. If you need to reduce your salt intake but have a poor appetite, or if you currently eat a lot of processed foods or ready meals, you could find it difficult to make some of the changes outlined in this booklet.

Please ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian for more help and information.

Useful websites and resources

Consensus Action Salt and Health

<http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk>

Consensus Action Salt and Health- international low salt recipes

Consensus Action Salt and Health –

Simple to use app for smartphones to help you find out what's in the food you're eating, so you can make simple switches to healthier options. FoodSwitch allows you to scan the barcodes of your food and drinks and instantly see whether they are high (red), medium (amber) or low (green) in fat, saturates, sugars and salt per 100g

<http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/foodswitch/index.html>

UK blood pressure association

<http://www.bloodpressureuk.org>

NHS choices – Salt: the facts

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/salt.aspx>

Further related resources available from the Dietetic department are available:

Salt content of various cheeses

Low salt sandwich filling ideas

Salt content of condiments

Low salt recipes

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

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