

# **The Top Foods Contributing To Salt In Our Diet**

By: [Mike Francis](#)

To those who live for hamburgers and hot dogs: You're not going to like this list. Same with you, bagel biters and pepperoni people.

But it's the knowledge you should have. You're eating a lot of salt. And it's coming from an assortment of foods that are very common in the American diet. This matters because, while salt adds flavor to foods, too much can contribute to hypertension, which is a risk factor for heart disease.

[The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported](#) how much salt Americans are consuming and where it's coming from.

## **Take this with many grains of salt**

Here is the list of popular foods that account for most of our intake of salt, ranked in order, according to the CDC:

1. Yeast breads
2. Pizza
3. Hamburgers, hot dogs, and other sandwiches
4. Cold cuts and cured meats
5. Soups
6. Burritos and tacos
7. Chips, popcorn, pretzels, snack mixes, and crackers
8. Chicken
9. Cheese
10. Eggs and omelets

“About 25 foods contribute the majority of salt” in American diets, Zerleen Quader, a CDC analyst, told HealthDay. The CDC's report, most salty food is purchased at stores, but the density of sodium is highest in restaurant food, especially fast food and pizza restaurants.

## **The trouble with salt**

[For many people, salt causes problems](#) because the kidneys struggle to keep up with excess sodium in the blood, causing the body to hold water to dilute it. That increases the volume of blood flowing through the bloodstream, which causes increased work and pressure on blood vessels. Over time, blood vessels can stiffen, contributing to high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke.

“Moderate sodium reduction in the food supply is a key recommended public health strategy to prevent cardiovascular disease,” [wrote Quader in the CDC report](#).

The good news, [according to the T.H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard](#), is that people can lower their risk of too much sodium by eating more fresh vegetables and fruits and less bread, cheese, and processed meat.

### **How much salt do you need?**

The goals set by the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's [Healthy People 2020 Initiative](#) call for people aged 2 and older to consume 2,300 milligrams a day. That's the amount contained in 1 teaspoon of salt, a lot less than what many people are actually eating: The 2009-2012 baseline average was 3,658 milligrams a day.

The American Heart Association notes that table salt is about 40 percent sodium. [The organization offers tips for limiting your intake:](#)

- Choose low-sodium alternatives.
- Read the labels when buying prepared and packaged foods.
- Buy and eat more fruits and vegetables, which are high in potassium and low in sodium.
- Eat fruits and vegetables as snacks.
- Select unsalted nuts, beans, peas, and lentils.
- Don't add salt when cooking. Take the salt shaker off your table. Use pepper and other spices instead.

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