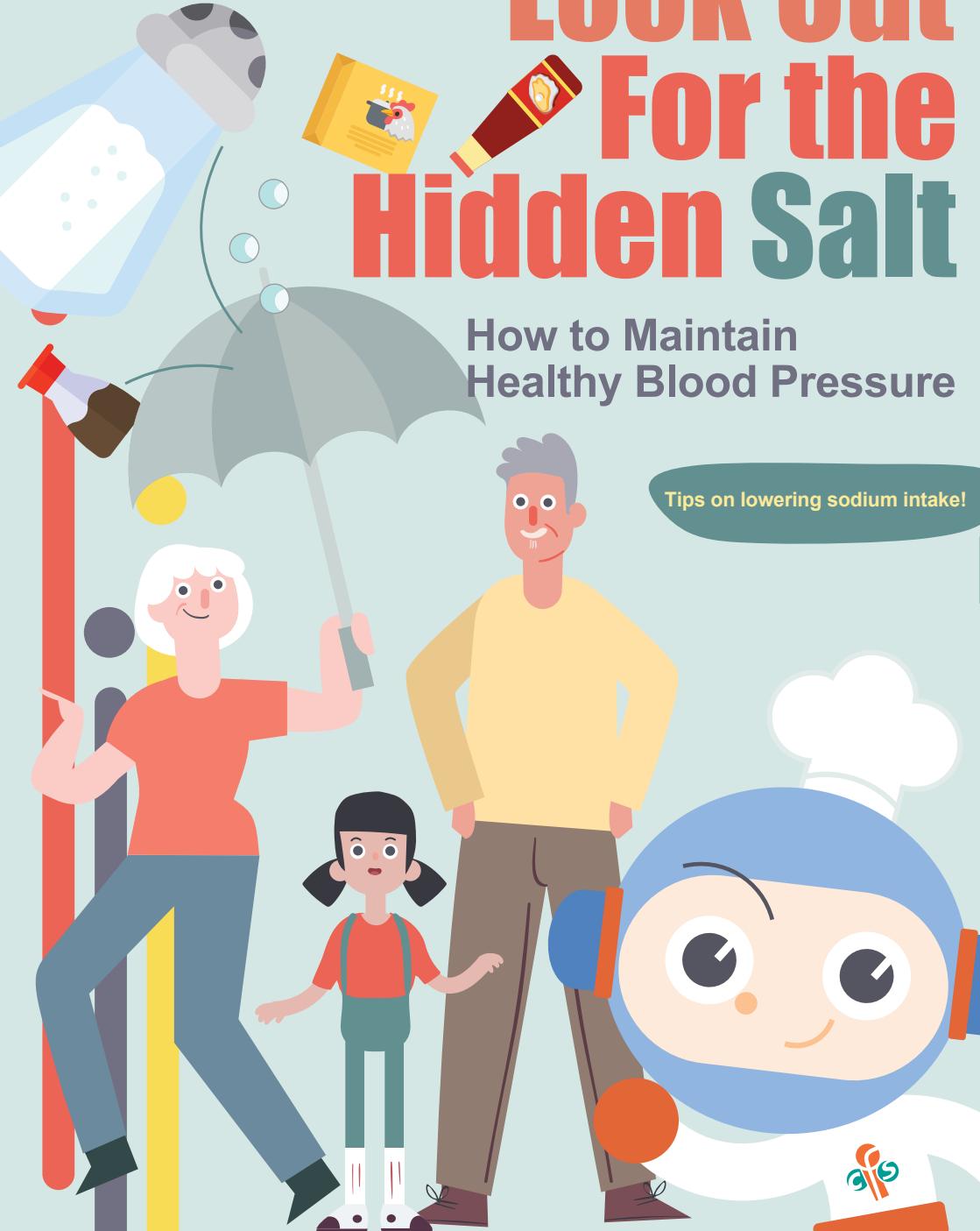


Look Out For the Hidden Salt

How to Maintain Healthy Blood Pressure

Tips on lowering sodium intake!



Sodium (Salt) and Hypertension



The World Health Organization recommends that the daily intake of sodium (salt) for an average adult should be less than 2000 mg (i.e. slightly less than 1 level teaspoon of table salt). Reduction of sodium intake helps lower the risk of hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

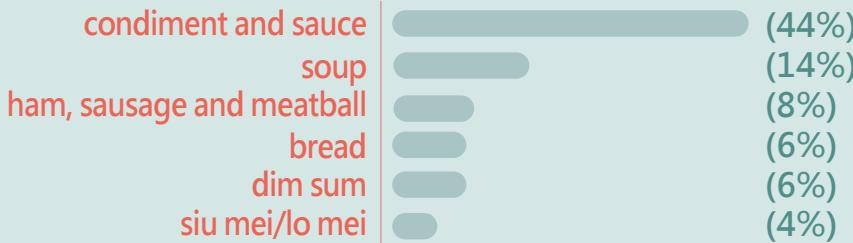
Children should have less sodium intake than adults. The younger a child, the lesser amount of sodium he/she requires per day. As for elderly people, due to lowered sensitivity to taste, they may tend to prefer salty foods.

In fact, excessive sodium intake will increase the risk of non-communicable diseases for people of all ages. Therefore, we must not ignore the importance of reducing sodium intake in our diet for the sake of our health.

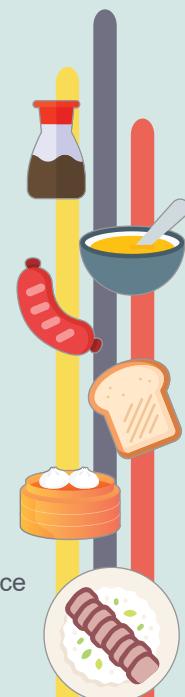


Major Food Sources of Sodium (Salt) Intake in Hong Kong

According to the studies conducted by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS), the major food groups contributing to sodium (salt) intake for local adults include:



The public should maintain a balanced and varied diet with more fresh produce and meat but less preserved and processed foods.



Go for Less Sodium

With a hectic pace of city life, many local people have fallen into a habit of often eating out which, however, hides a number of diet traps such as excessive intake of sodium, posing potential risks to health. When patronising restaurants, ordering takeaways or buying prepackaged foods, keep in mind the following tips on lowering sodium intake:

Pay attention to the ingredients in foods and choose foods low in fat, sugar and sodium as the foundation of a healthy diet

Choose foods lower in fat and sodium

Beware of the amount of sauces

Beware of the portion size

Choose products participating in the “Salt/Sugar” Label Scheme for Prepackaged Food Products

Patronise EatSmart Restaurants
(restaurant.eatsmart.gov.hk/eng/home.aspx)

Ask for toasts or plain rolls/buns without butter, drinks without sugar or with less milk, sauces on the side or to be skipped, and pay attention to the fillings.

Change fried eggs to boiled eggs, sausages to meat or fish slices, preserved mustard greens or mui choy to natural spices such as onions, garlic and pepper, etc.

Ask for sauces to be served on the side and taste before adding.

When ordering or buying foods, beware of the portion size. If it exceeds the amount for personal consumption, consider sharing with others or ordering/buying fewer foods.

Check the sodium content on the nutrition label and choose more “low salt” and “low sugar” products.



Choose “3 low” dishes, i.e. dishes low in fat, sugar and salt for a healthy diet.



The Hidden Salt in the Kitchen

Even if you eat at home, do not take it lightly. Sodium is hiding in many Chinese condiments and sauces that you cook with. The table below lists some of the common condiments and sauces that are high in sodium. Adding another spoonful may give you more sodium than you need without you noticing it, so try to use less when cooking.



Sodium Content per Tablespoon

2100mg

Sodium Contribution to Daily Upper Intake

105%

High Sodium Index



1300mg

65%



Shrimp Paste

1190mg

60%





Sodium Content per Tablespoon

1000mg

Sodium Contribution to Daily Upper Intake

50%

750mg

38%

620mg

31%

390mg

20%

High Sodium Index



If you like your food delicious yet low in sodium, use natural ingredients like spices and herbs for flavouring, such as garlic, ginger, spring onion, vinegar, lemon juice, lemongrass, “spice ginger” powder, five spice powder, seven spice powder, Chinese prickly ash, star anise and basil. You may also use ingredients containing glutamic acid such as mushroom and tomato as a substitute for high sodium sauces to add flavour to your dishes.



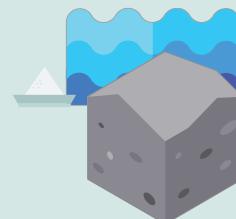
Salt Reduction Scheme

A number of food trade members have participated in the Salt Reduction Scheme launched by the CFS to reduce the sodium content in their food products in accordance with the voluntary sodium reduction targets, so as to reduce the sodium intake of Hong Kong people. For information on the participating food trade members, please visit the CFS website: https://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rdss/programme_rdss.html



Are Rock Salt and Sea Salt Healthier

Table salt is a mineral mainly composed of sodium chloride, with about 60% chloride and 40% sodium. Table salt is mainly produced from the ocean, underground salt mines or natural brine, while fine salt is produced by dissolving and recrystallising raw salt.



Rock salt and sea salt are not much different from the coarse salt and fine salt that we usually consume, as they are also mainly composed of sodium chloride. Produced by natural sun drying or crystallisation, rock salt and sea salt retain more impurities, including minerals which, however, are of a tiny amount insufficient for daily needs, so these salts should not be used as a mineral supplement.



In addition, chicken powder and monosodium glutamate (MSG), though they are not salt, are also condiments high in sodium and should be limited in consumption.