Facts about salt
Salt is only needed in very small amounts in the diet. It is made up of two parts, sodium and chloride, and it is the sodium part that causes problems in our health if eaten in large amounts. The sodium in salt is an important mineral for balancing water levels in the body. It also helps control the work of the nerves and muscles in the body. Sodium is added to foods and can be used in making bread and preserving meats. Too much salt is not good for health and can lead to raised blood pressure, which triples your chances of developing heart disease and stroke. Eating salty foods from childhood can produce high blood pressure that with time worsens with age. The recommended maximum amount of salt for an adult is 6g per day.

Most of the salt we eat comes from processed foods, fast foods, and canteen and restaurant food. About 75% of the salt that we eat is hidden in everyday foods. These include processed meats, bacon, sausages, puddings, ready-made meals and sauces. Packet soups, stock cubes, gravy granules and some breakfast cereals and breads are also high in salt, as are salty snacks. Eat less of these high salt foods and remember to check the label. As well as this, we add salt to our food at home in cooking or at the table during meals. Only 15% occurs naturally in food.

Tips on how to eat less salt
Remember – cutting down on salt can help you to lower your blood pressure.

Try to reduce salt in food by:
• Using less salt yourself in cooking
• Eating more fresh foods
• Have less processed or salty snacks and foods.

1. Eat more natural foods
Natural foods contain little or no salt. Choose from:
• Lower fat and low-salt dairy, for example, natural yogurt and skimmed milk
• Starchy foods like potatoes, grains, oats and rice
• Fruits, vegetables (fresh, frozen, dried or tinned with no salt)
• Fresh fish, plain chicken, lean meat, eggs, unsalted nuts and seeds.

2. Eat less processed foods
As 75% of the salt in our food is found in processed foods. Check the labels to see which have less salt. Try to eat less or reduce the portion size of high salt foods.

Examples of processed foods are:
• Most breakfast cereals
• Bread and sandwiches
• Tinned and packed soups
• Meat products, for example, bacon, sausages or tinned meat
• Salted, smoked or tinned fish
• Biscuits, cakes and crackers and snacks, for example, crisps or peanuts
• Fast foods, for example, Chinese and Indian takeaways or hamburgers
• Ready-made meals, for example, pizzas, pasta dishes or curry
• Instant foods, for example, noodles
• Some brands of baked beans.

Swap it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High salt</th>
<th>Low salt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carton, tinned or packet soup</td>
<td>Bowl of homemade soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fries, battered fish and peas</td>
<td>Fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisps</td>
<td>Unsalted popcorn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.eatright.eu
3. When cooking foods
It is important to cut down on the amount of salt that you add to your food when you are cooking. Avoid adding extra salt to dishes during preparation or cooking.

Use less of the following high-salt products to flavour foods:

- Table salt, sea salt, rock salt
- Garlic salt, stock cubes, soy sauce, gravy granules, sauces like ketchup or brown sauce
- Curry powders and some spices. These often have added salt – check the label.

Try to use alternatives to salt, such as herbs and spices, peppers, chillies, ginger, cinnamon, lemon juice and vinegar.

4. Food shopping: Look at food labels when buying foods
There are many types of salt – table salt, sea salt, rock salt and flakes. Salt is made up of two parts, sodium and chloride, and it is the sodium part that is bad for our health when too much is eaten.

Labels on food can be confusing at the best of times and even more so when it comes to salt. This is because they usually list the amount of sodium, not salt. It is important to remember that sodium is only a small part of salt: every 2.5g of salt in a food contains 1g of sodium. So listing the amount of sodium and not salt on a label can be quite misleading.

A quick guide to comparing whether foods are high or low in salt is to see how many grams of salt the product contains per 100g. EU guidelines on nutrition labels tell you if a food is high in salt:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>Over 1.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>0.3g to 1.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>0.3g and under</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are trying to cut down on salt, you should limit your consumption of foods that have more than 1.5g/100g. The colour-coded front of pack labels can help you see this easily.

5. Eating out
It is important to keep in mind that when someone else cooks your food, like takeaway burgers and fish and chips, you do not have control over the amount of salt, fat and sugar they add. Try not to add extra salt yourself.

- Always taste the food before you add any seasoning
- Try seasoning your food with black pepper instead of salt
- Choose fresh food over processed food – salad and fresh fruit, for example.

FACTS ABOUT SUGAR
Sugar contains lots of Calories but little goodness – the correct term for what we commonly call ‘Calories’ is kiloCalories (kcal). Most food labels will show the energy value in both kilojoules (kJ) and kiloCalories.

Eating too much sugar can cause weight gain. So it’s best to keep it to small amounts in your diet. Sugar can also cause tooth decay – especially when you have sugary foods or drinks (including fruit juices) on their own. It’s better to have sugary foods or drinks with a meal, or just afterwards.

Many processed foods like ready meals, confectionery and cakes contain high levels of added sugars and can be high in energy value (kJ/kcal). Many soft drinks contain mostly sugar and provide very little nourishment. Cutting down on these will help you be a healthy weight. Sports drinks or energy drinks are also high in sugar. Food and drinks high in sugar need to be limited. Only have these foods in small amounts.

Tips on how to eat less sugar

1. Cut down and find alternatives
   - If you add sugar to your tea, coffee or breakfast cereal, gradually reduce the amount you add until it’s little or none
   - If you eat sugary breakfast cereals, try substituting with some wholemeal flakes. Aim to eventually switch to wholemeal cereals
   - Read the labels on pre-packed foods and go for the low-sugar options
   - Limit fizzy drinks. Try unsweetened fruit juice mixed with sparkling water instead. But keep this to mealtimes to protect your teeth
   - Use fruit to sweeten things instead of syrup or jam. Try bananas sliced on toast for breakfast, or peaches tinned in their own juice with yogurt as a dessert
   - It’s best to keep sugar to small amounts in your diet to prevent weight gain.

2. Watch out for sugar in drinks
   Sugar can also cause tooth decay, especially when you have sugary foods or drinks (including fruit juices) on their own. It’s better to have sugary foods or drinks with a meal, or just afterwards.
   Fizzy drinks contain a lot of sugar and can be very harmful to teeth so try not to drink them too often and when you do, have them with meals. Alternatives such as ‘sugar free’ or ‘diet’ varieties contain less or no sugar but are still quite acidic. Using a straw will reduce the amount of sugar that comes into contact with teeth.
   - If you take sports drinks remember that like other fizzy drinks and squashes they contain sugar and will contribute to tooth decay. Sports drinks are not something that should be consumed every day outside of sporting activities. Unless you are doing endurance sport [an activity for a very long period of time], water is the best way to rehydrate.
   - Stimulant or so-called “energy” drinks usually contain a lot of sugar and caffeine. And while some of their ingredients pose no health concerns, these drinks are not suitable as a thirst quencher after sports activities. Caution should also be taken when consuming these drinks with alcohol or medication, and they should not be consumed by children or pregnant women.
3. Read the Label
Did you know added sugars can be called by their chemical names – sucrose, glucose and maltose – and are also in syrups and honey, so always check the nutrition label on the back or side of packaged foods.

**EU guidelines on nutrition labels to tell you if a food or drink is high in sugar.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>Over 22.5g per 100g</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>5g to 22.5g per 100g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>5g or less per 100g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are trying to cut down on sugar, you should limit your consumption of foods that have more than 22.5g/100g.

4. Change some habits
There are simple changes you can make that cut down the amount of sugar you consume.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swap</th>
<th>For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugary cereal</td>
<td>Bowl of wheat biscuits, porridge or a wholegrain cereal and a glass of orange juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular bars of chocolate</td>
<td>Treat-size bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugary drinks</td>
<td>Water, milk or zero Calorie drink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FACTS ABOUT FATS, OILS AND SPREADS**

Both the amount and type of fat you eat is important.

**Did you know?**

- 1 teaspoon of oil contains 5g of fat.
- 1 heaped teaspoon of margarine or butter has almost 6g of fat.
- 1 heaped teaspoon of lower fat spread or lower fat butter has almost 3g fat.
- Reduced fat spreads contain different amounts so check the label.

All oils contain a lot of fat (100%). Margarines and butter (80%) contain the same amount of energy value (kJ/kcal) and fat (80%) but have different types of fat. Lower fat margarine and lower fat butter have less fat (about 40%).

There are two main types of fat in the diet, saturated and unsaturated fat. All fats and oils are very high in energy value (kJ/kcal). Use as little as possible of the different types of fats, spread and oils. We need to be careful about the type of fat we eat:

1. **Saturated fat** ("bad fat") is normally found in animal foods. If you have too much saturated fat in your diet, your cholesterol in your blood increases and this can put you at risk of heart disease. We need to reduce these fats and oils as much as possible in our diet. These harmful fats include the white fat you see on meat, and are also in sausages, puddings and meat pies, as well as in butter, hard margarines, lard and some dairy products like hard cheese and cream. Saturated fats are also in pastries, cakes, biscuits, chocolate, confectionery and salty snacks like crisps. Reduce your intake of saturated fats by limiting these foods to special occasions.

2. **Unsaturated fat** ("good fat") such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats is mainly found in plant foods and most pure vegetable oils, the spreads made from these and in seeds and nuts. These fats are better for your health and so are healthier types to include in your diet. However, you still need to be careful with the total amount of fat you eat. Choose vegetable oils that are high in monounsaturated fats, such as rapeseed or olive oil, as well as oils high in polyunsaturated fat, such as sunflower oil and corn oil, as they are better for your health than saturated fat (butter, lard).

Remember all types of fat and oils are high in energy value (kJ/kcal). While some fats and oils help to protect against heart disease (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats), it is important to remember that they are just as high in energy value (kJ/kcal) as other more harmful fats and oils (saturated, hydrogenated (hardened) and trans fats).

**EU guidelines on nutrition labels for telling you if a food is high in fat**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total fat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saturated fat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cut down on foods high in fat**

Foods such as cakes, sweets, biscuits and butter are high in fats and low in nutrients. Eating too many foods high in fat, including saturated fat, should be avoided. Here are some handy tips:

- Limit to sometimes, not every day and only in very small amounts.
- Don’t be tempted to swap eating healthy foods so you can have more foods high in fat. You need healthy foods in the proportions recommended, as per the eatwell plate, to provide all your vitamins and minerals.
- Choose reduced fat versions of polyunsaturated or monounsaturated spread.
- Choose lean cuts of meat (remove all visible fat), poultry where possible.
- Choose lower fat dairy foods where possible, for example, lower fat milk, yogurt and cheese.
- Oily fish is the best source of an essential fat called Omega 3. This fat is also good for heart health. The best types of oily fish are salmon, mackerel, herring and trout.
Swap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swap</th>
<th>For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full milk and yogurt</td>
<td>lower fat milk and lower fat yogurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frying food</td>
<td>Boiling, baking, grilling or steaming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are trying to cut down on fat, you should limit your consumption of foods and drinks that have more than 3g/100g of total fat and more than 1.5g/100g of saturated fat.

Food labelling plays an important role in making healthier choices. Food labels can be used to make healthier, safer and more informed food choices when choosing between products. Food labels let you know what nutrients manufactured food products contain. The ingredients’ label and nutrition panel on the back of pack can help you to make healthier choices.

You might:
- Use the label to choose a food from the meat, fish and alternatives group that has less fat, for example, lean minced meat
- Read the label before buying frozen vegetables. For example, the label may show that cauliflower sauce has more fat than plain cauliflower
- Find useful information on food labels about particular nutrients.

Front of Pack labelling
The new voluntary Front of Pack (FoP) nutrition labelling system was launched to help you see at a glance what is in your food. It is colour-coded red, amber and green. In addition to colour coding, you will also see the number of grams of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt in a portion or a ‘serving’ of the food.

The label also highlights ‘percentage reference intakes’ (formerly known as guideline daily amounts). The percentage reference intake is based on the amount of each nutrient and energy value which is provided in a portion of the food for an adult.

Food products which display colour coding labels (red, amber or green) on the front of the pack help you choose the healthier option. The labels let you know if the food you are buying has high, medium or low amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt.

You will find Front of Pack labelling mostly on processed convenience foods, such as ready meals, pizzas, sausages, burgers, pies, sandwiches and breakfast cereals.

Portion size information is provided in easily understood language, for example,
- ¼ of a pie
- 1 burger
- ½ pizza.

Percentage Reference Intake (% RI) information based on the amount of each nutrient and energy value in a portion of the food is provided. The term ‘Reference Intake’ has replaced ‘Guideline Daily Amounts.’

Energy value in kilojoules and kiloCalories per 100g/ml and in a specified portion of the product is also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Energy</th>
<th>Fat</th>
<th>Saturates</th>
<th>Sugars</th>
<th>Salt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1400 kJ</td>
<td>14g</td>
<td>7g</td>
<td>4g</td>
<td>0.9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>334 kcal</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of an adult’s reference intake

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: Energy 966kJ / 230 kcal

Voluntary front of pack nutrition labelling cannot be given on its own. The full mandatory (back of pack) nutrition declaration must also be provided. This comprises information on the energy, fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, protein and salt contained in the product.

What do the colours mean?
A red colour on the front of pack means the food is high in something you should try to cut down on in your diet. It is fine to have the food occasionally, or as a treat, but you should watch how often they choose these foods, or try eating them in smaller amounts.

An amber colour means the food isn’t high or low in the nutrient, so this is an acceptable choice most of the time. You might want to go for green for that nutrient some of the time.

A green colour means the food is low in that nutrient. The more green lights, the healthier the choice. Many of the foods with colour coding that you see in shops will have a mixture of red, amber and green. So, when choosing between similar products, you should choose foods with more greens and ambers, and fewer reds, to ensure healthier choices.