

SODIUM



WHAT IS SODIUM?

Sodium is a mineral that is found in table salt and many other foods. It increases flavour to our food and is a natural preservative. The body requires sodium to maintain blood pressure and for normal nerve and muscle function, however in the typical Canadian diet, we consume far more sodium than we need, increasing the risk of developing high blood pressure, leading to other health problems.

WHY IS TOO MUCH SODIUM HARMFUL?

Sodium attracts water, so, when you consume too much, it draws more water into our blood stream, leading to an increased volume of our blood. This extra volume puts more pressure on the walls of our vessels, which then increases our blood pressure. High blood pressure can cause damage to your vessels over time, which allows for a build-up of plaque, causing the vessels to narrow. This narrowing increases the likelihood of a blood clot to form, leading to an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

THE NUMBERS:

- Most adults require 1500mg of sodium per day.

- On average, Canadians consume 3400mg per day.
- To decrease your risk of chronic disease, it is recommended that you reduce your intake to below 2300mg per day.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SALT:

Consumers now have the choice of many different types of salt, with claims to be healthier than table salt. These include kosher salt, sea salt, rock salt and Himalyan salt. These salts are no different from table salt in terms of their effects on your health, as they all have the same amount of sodium per teaspoon. The main difference is that they cost more!

TIPS TO REDUCE YOUR SODIUM INTAKE:

1. Limit highly processed foods.
2. Compare food labels and choose the foods with the least sodium.
3. Eat out less, cook at home more.
4. Use herbs and spices to season food without salt.