

MANAGING SODIUM INTAKE

WHY DOES YOUR BODY NEED SODIUM?

1

MAINTAIN FLUID
BALANCE

2

TRANSMIT NERVE
IMPULSES

3

MUSCLE CONTRACTION
+ RELAXATION

Although it's an essential part of our diet, most Americans consume way too much. High sodium intake can raise blood pressure and high blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

At Stronger U we focus primarily on macronutrients because energy (caloric) intake is the driving force behind changes in weight and body composition. However, micronutrients (vitamins and minerals), including sodium, are essential for overall health and for your body to function optimally.

Even though Stronger U focuses less on micronutrients (since our food recommendations usually have you covered), you have probably heard your coach discuss sodium intake in relation to weight fluctuations. This is because sodium is an electrolyte and plays a major role in our hydration status and fluid balance. Have you ever gone to a restaurant for dinner and the next morning the scale jumped up a few pounds? This was not true weight gain, but rather fluid retention from the salty restaurant meal. Think of it as weight borrowed, not weight gained. You may even notice after a salty meal your feet or fingers swell a bit from the fluid retention. This is important to note because if you see the scale spike overnight chances are it's related to a multitude of other things such as fluid retention with higher sodium intake rather than true weight gain don't get discouraged, but rather keep macros consistent and you will see the scale normalize in the next few days.



Real Life Application

MANAGING SODIUM INTAKE

1500 - 2,300 mg

The recommended amount of sodium to consume each day as a part of a healthy eating pattern, which is equivalent to 1 tsp or less of salt.

It's important to note that some individuals, particularly athletes, may need more especially under hot and humid conditions when they are sweating a lot. Be sure to talk to your coach and medical provider about that!

Processed and restaurant foods are the biggest culprit for the high sodium intake in our society. Processed foods include bread, pizza, deli meat, cheese, soups, condiments, and prepared dinners, etc.

If you are like most Americans and realize your sodium intake is higher than it should be, try these tips for decreasing sodium intake:

Eat more fresh, less processed foods.

Incorporate more fresh or frozen fruits and veggies and minimally processed protein. These processed foods include: deli meat, bacon, hot dogs, sausage, ham, etc.

Select low-sodium products.

Although processed foods are typically higher in sodium there is often a low sodium version available or variation in sodium content across brands.

Exchange salt for other herbs & spices while cooking.

Although salt adds a lot of flavor when cooking there are many other herbs, spices and foods to add flavor such as onions, garlic and citrus juice or zest.

Limit high sodium condiments.

Condiments such as soy sauce, ketchup, BBQ, salad dressings and relish can be loaded with sodium so look for a lower salt version or limit intake.

Look for low sodium options on menus.

Restaurant foods can be very high in sodium so ask if there are low sodium options available.



Main Takeaway

Although salt is important for our body to function optimally, most Americans are consuming more sodium than is recommended. By consuming the recommended amount of sodium you can decrease your risk of developing high blood pressure which is a major cause of stroke and heart disease.



Resources

If you want to learn more about managing blood pressure check out [this SU blog](#). The [CDC](#), [American Heart Association](#) and [FDA](#) also have some great resources on reducing sodium intake.