Strategies to reduce sodium intake include:

• Following the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet. This diet includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products. See the following website for more information: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf

• Rinsing canned foods and avoiding fast foods

• Avoid adding salt during cooking and at the table.

• Read food labels to determine sodium content of foods and avoid those high in sodium. Choose those that have 140mg or less per serving.

Tips:

• To assess food servings as low, medium and high in sodium use “The Food Label Guide” at www.eatwell.gov.bm

• Use fresh and frozen foods regularly

• Limit salty toppings and prepackaged foods

• Be aware of high salt cheeses

• Season foods with herbs and spices such as onions, garlic, onion powders, etc,

• Be aware of seasonings that contain salt e.g. seasoning salt, McKay’s chicken seasoning, garlic salt, soy sauce bouillon cubes

Nutrition Services
67 Victoria Street
Hamilton HM 12

T 278-6467/69
F 292-7627
E nutrition@gov.bm

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Common Names:
Salt, sodium, sea salt, iodized salt, table salt, kosher salt

What is sodium?
A mixture of sodium (40%) and chloride (60%). Sodium is an essential mineral used by the body for good health. It helps to maintain water balance in the body; and in the function of nerve impulses and muscles.

Where do I get sodium from?
• Salt is found naturally in most foods not just foods that taste salty. One-third to one-half of the sodium in our diets comes from salt added to food.
• Table salt used in baked goods and cooking
• Processed, canned, and cured meats and foods.
• Fast foods and condiments.

Recommended daily intake of Sodium:
• A “safe and adequate” intake for sodium is between 1,100 to 3,300 mg a day.
• A diet with no salt added after cooking and no excessively salty foods contains between 3,000 mg to 4,000 mg of sodium a day.
• If you have high blood pressure (hypertension), diabetes, kidney disease or are over age 51, eat 1,500 mg sodium (equal to 2/3 teaspoon of salt) or less a day.
• To prevent getting high blood pressure (hypertension) eat less than 2,300 mg sodium (equal to 1 teaspoon of salt) a day.

What happens if I get too much sodium?
• Excess sodium is emitted in the urine.
• Sodium sensitive persons unable to get rid of sodium efficiently have fluid retention.
• Fluid retention may cause high blood pressure (called hypertension).
• Uncontrolled high blood pressure may lead to heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.

What happens if I do not get enough sodium?
• It is unlikely not to get enough sodium as it is found in many foods.
• Athletes (particularly marathon runners) may need to eat more sodium containing foods to avoid low salt levels in the body.

Low salt levels can be caused by the following:
• Certain medications such as antidepressants and pain medications.
• Water pills (diuretics)
• Cirrhosis, congestive heart failure, severe vomiting or diarrhea, kidney failure and diseases.
• Drinking too much water during exercise
• Hormonal changes due to adrenal gland insufficiency (Addison’s disease), underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism) primary polydipsia and high levels of the anti-diuretic hormone (ADH)
• The recreational drug Ecstasy
• Dehydration
• A low-sodium, high-water diet