

Spotlight on salt

Here are a few important numbers that should not be taken with a pinch of salt:

- 50% of strokes in South Africa are related to high blood pressure.
- 42% of ischaemic heart disease in South Africa is related to high blood pressure.
- 72% of hypertensive heart disease in South Africa is related to high blood pressure.
- 22% of other cardiovascular disease in South Africa is related to high blood pressure.
- 0 or rare are the symptoms or visible signs that your blood pressure is high; it is therefore known as a 'silent killer'.
- 1 or more is the number of times you should have your blood pressure checked. If you have high blood pressure or a family history of high blood pressure, you may need to have your blood pressure measured more often.
- Less than 120/80 to 129/84 mm Hg is regarded as a normal blood pressure measurement. The first number is your systolic blood pressure (SBP), a measure of blood pressure when your heart muscle contracts e.g. 120. The second number is your diastolic blood pressure (DBP), a measure of blood pressure when your heart muscle relaxes e.g. 80. The measurement is expressed as systolic blood pressure over diastolic blood pressure (SDP/DBP).
- 1 in 3 South Africans have high blood pressure. A key driver of high blood pressure is high salt intake.
- 5 grams is the maximum amount of salt an adult should consume in one day, according to the World Health Organisation.
- 6 – 11 grams is the average amount of salt South Africans are consuming in one day, up to more than double the recommended amount.
- ~ 40% of salt in the diets of South Africans is from adding salt to foods during cooking or at the table.
- ~ 60% of salt in the diets of South Africans is found in pre-packaged foods.
- 1g salt = 400 mg sodium; Firstly, one needs to convert grams of salt to milligrams by multiplying by 1000; secondly one needs to convert milligrams of salt into milligrams of sodium by dividing the number by 2.5. This is an important conversion, as food labels in South Africa indicate the level of sodium in pre-packaged foods and not salt.
- 120 mg per 100 g sodium = low sodium product.
- 40 mg per 100 g sodium = very low sodium product
- 5 mg per 100 g sodium = virtually free or free from sodium product.

It's important to know what your blood pressure is, as an uncontrolled high blood pressure can result in a heart attack or stroke, as well as affect the functioning of other organs such as your kidneys and eyes. Get your blood pressure measured and take a closer look at the amount of salt you are taking in, as a high salt intake raises your blood pressure. Registered dietitians are able to assist

you in assessing your salt intake in the context of your diet and lifestyle, and are able to develop balanced, nutritious and tasty meal plans with reduced salt for you and your family. To find a dietitian in your area: [link to find a dietitian](#).

Registered Dietitian: Linda Drummond

References:

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WHO. Guideline: sodium intake for adults and children. Geneva, World Health Organization (WHO), 2012.

Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act 1972 (Act 54 of 1972), Regulations relating to the labelling and advertising of foodstuffs, 1 March 2010.