

Other Salts and Salt Substitutes



Sea salt, rock salt and Himalayan salt

Many people switch to more expensive and premium forms of salt, such as sea salt and pink Himalayan salt, because they believe that they are healthier than regular table salt. Surveys have shown that 61% of consumers believe that sea salt is lower in sodium than table salt. Garlic salt and celery salt are also popular alternatives to standard table salt.

Food companies and chefs often highlight the fact that sea salt has been used in a food with the implication that it makes it a tastier and more natural product.

Do not be deceived! Salt is salt.

No matter how expensive salt is, whether it comes in crystals or grains, from the sea or from the Himalayas, our research has shown that all salts have more or less the same sodium content as table salt. Apart from certain alternatives to sodium salts (such as potassium salt) all salt is high in sodium, which increases your blood pressure and this increases your risk of heart disease, stroke and a number of other health conditions.

Potassium Salt

Salts which contain a combination of sodium and potassium chloride are now widely available in the UK. Potassium salts have around 60% less sodium than standard table salt and so do not carry the same high risks as sodium based salts.

Potassium salts may even have a beneficial effect on your blood pressure because potassium is an antagonist of sodium. Potassium salts can be used in the same way as standard table salt and many people feel they do replace their need for salt.

NOTE: People with kidney disease or diabetes should seek medical advice before using potassium salts, as an increase in potassium intake may not be advisable.

A study from Ireland demonstrated that lasagne produced with reduced salt levels and potassium salt scored higher for taste than the 'normal' salt version. The lower salt lasagne had nearly 30% less salt than the normal lasagne, without affecting the overall taste and saltiness of the finished product

However, although you have less sodium, you still have salt tasting foods and therefore your preferences for salt will not change.

Iodised Salt

Action on Salt acknowledges that iodine deficiency is a potentially serious problem in the UK, particularly in teenage girls and in unplanned pregnancies. However, we are concerned about the public health implication of using iodised table salt as the solution, when iodine can be obtained from many other sources.

We feel that, given the high intake of salt we have in the UK and the progress that is being made, making salt beneficial to our diet is a conflict in public health. If people are aware of their need to increase iodine consumption we do not want them to think that increasing their intake of table salt is the answer.

White fish, shellfish, oily fish, cow's milk, yogurt and eggs are a good source of iodine.

Adjusting to lower salt foods

Reducing the amount of salt in your food helps to improve health. Foods may initially taste bland but within two or three weeks you will become accustomed to the taste of lower salt foods. During this time the salt taste receptors in the mouth become much more sensitive to salt and you will begin to detect salt much more easily at lower levels.

Using other sources of flavour, such as herbs, spices, black pepper, vinegar, lemon juice and chilli can improve completely the taste of food to make the transition even easier for you.

How you can help

Although there has been significant progress in reducing the salt content of processed foods, there is a lot more that can be done. The food industry claims that none of their customers ever tell them they want foods with less salt. Unless consumers demand it, they are less likely to make changes and the changes they do make will be done slowly.

You can help by adding your voice. Why not write to your local supermarket to ask them to lower the amount of salt in your favourite foods?

