

Ask the Dietitians

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The following question was submitted last month by a reader and it might be one you've wondered about but never asked. If you have a question you would like the dietitians to answer, please email it to stevenchudikmd@gmail.com/.

Q. *Is sea salt any better for you than table salt, and is it a healthier option if you are trying to cut down on sodium?*

A. No, sea salt is not a healthier option for people who are trying to cut back on sodium. The reason is because by weight, both table and sea salt contain the same amount of sodium. The difference between sea salt and table salt is in the processing, not the chemical composition. Both sea salt and table salt are made of a combination of sodium and chloride. Sea salt comes from the evaporation of seawater, while table salt is mined from salt deposits. In addition, table salt usually contains iodine, as well as additives to prevent it from clumping, which sea salt does not.

The human body requires a very small amount of salt, so it is likely you are meeting your needs. In fact, most people usually exceed the recommended guideline of 2300 mg/day (1500 mg/day for those who are age 51 or older, black, or have a history of high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease.) Reading the Nutrition Facts on food labels are a good way to find out how much sodium is in the foods you eat. Make sure to look at the serving size of the foods you are eating and multiply the amount of sodium by the number of servings you eat.

Although sea salt has gotten a lot of media attention lately, table salt is a good source of iodine. If you have been told to cut back on sodium, then you should make sure to eat foods high in iodine. The Food and Nutrition Board at the Institute of Medicine recommends the following dietary intake for iodine:

Children

- 1—3 years: 90 mcg/day
- 4—8 years: 90 mcg/day
- 9—13 years: 120 mcg/day



Sea salt harvest

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Adolescents and Adults

- Males and females age 14 and older: 150 mcg/day
- Women who are pregnant or breast feeding need higher amounts. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends 250 mcg/day during pregnancy and lactation. However, always consult your health care provider about the amount that is best for you.

A 1/4 teaspoon of iodized table salt provides 95 micrograms (mcg) of iodine. Most people are able to meet the daily recommendations by eating seafood, iodized salt and plants grown in iodine-rich soil. When buying salt, make sure it is labeled "iodized."

Here are some foods that provide a good source of iodine.

Food	Approximate Microgram per Serving	Percent Daily Value
Cod, baked, 3 ounces	99	66%
Yogurt, plain, low-fat, 1 cup	75	50%
Iodized salt, 1.5 g (approximately 1/4 teaspoon)	71	47%
Milk, reduced fat, 1 cup	56	37%
Fish sticks, 3 ounces	54	36%
Bread, white, enriched, 2 slices	45	30%
Fruit cocktail in heavy syrup, canned, 1/2 cup	42	28%
Shrimp, 3 ounces	35	23%
Ice cream, chocolate, 1/2 cup	30	20%
Macaroni, enriched, boiled, 1 cup	27	18%
Egg, 1 large	24	16%

