



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

SODIUM IN DRINKING WATER FACT SHEET

What is sodium?

Sodium is a naturally occurring element found in water, soils, plants, and foods. Sodium is an essential nutrient for your health. Sodium controls fluid balance in your body and maintains blood volume and blood pressure.

Food is the main source of daily exposure to sodium. Most of the sodium you consume is from packaged, processed, store-bought, and restaurant foods. Only a small amount is added during preparation and cooking or while eating fresh foods. Most water supplies contain some level of sodium. Sodium in drinking water is a minor contribution to a person's overall daily sodium intake.

How might I be exposed to sodium in my drinking water?

Near coastal areas, sodium occurs naturally in groundwater from salt water intrusion. Sewage effluents, water treatment chemicals, domestic water softeners and salt used in road de-icing can all contribute to quantities of sodium in surface water supplies.

Sodium compounds added during treatment for softening water will also increase the sodium content of drinking water.

What is the standard for sodium in drinking water?

New Jersey Division of Environmental Protection (DEP) has a recommended upper limit (RUL) of 50 milligrams per liter (50 mg/L) for sodium in drinking water.

How much sodium should I consume on a daily basis?

The *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend that healthy adults should consume no more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. Most Americans eat more than this amount, about 3,400 mg per day.

Persons in the following groups: 51 years of age and older, those of any age who are African American, or those who have high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease, should consume no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.

Some persons may need even less sodium to control certain health problems. Consult with your medical care provider on how much sodium you should consume on a daily basis.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), an adult drinking about 8 glasses of water per day would typically take in less than 100 mg of sodium per day from drinking water when the concentrations of sodium were less than 50 mg/L. While this amount is a very small part of the 2,300 mg of sodium per day recommendation, higher levels may be of concern to persons on a very restricted sodium diet.

What are the health effects of high sodium consumption?

High sodium consumption increases your risk for high blood pressure. High blood pressure can lead to heart disease and stroke.

For additional information: Please contact the Bergen County Department of Health Services at 201-634-2600 or visit our website at www.bergenhealth.org. Please visit U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for information on drinking water at <http://water.epa.gov/drink/>; CDC's website for information on sodium in your diet at <http://www.cdc.gov/salt/> and U.S. Food and Drug Administration at <http://www.fda.gov/>.



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