

The Health Dangers of Processed Salts

Exploring salt substitutes and all natural salts for the safest options

By Dana Yarn, RDL

While salt gives foods flavor and makes meals more enjoyable, consuming too much salt can adversely affect our health. Extensive research has proven that the consumption of excess salt (sodium) puts people at risk for several health concerns, including heart disease and hypertension. Additionally, consuming a surplus of salt over a prolonged period of time trains the taste buds to expect excessive salt in our meals, which puts our daily salt consumption near or even double recommended sodium intake levels.

Sodium – though only in small amounts – is an essential nutrient our bodies need to properly function. Sodium helps maintain the right balance of fluids in the body, assists with transmitting nerve impulses, and influences the contraction and relaxation of muscles.

The kidneys naturally balance the amount of sodium that's stored in the body and needed for optimal health. When sodium levels are low, the kidneys essentially hold onto the sodium. Conversely, when sodium levels are high, the kidneys excrete the excess through urine. If the kidneys can't eliminate enough sodium, it begins to accumulate in the bloodstream. This causes the body to hold water, which in turn increases blood volume. Increased blood volume makes the heart work harder to move the excess blood through the blood vessels, which increases pressure in the arteries – otherwise known as high blood pressure. Diseases like congestive heart failure, cirrhosis and chronic kidney disease can make it difficult for the kidneys to keep sodium levels in the body balanced. If increased blood pressure becomes chronic, it can lead to heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and congestive heart failure.

Here are some helpful facts about sodium:

- The 2010 **Dietary Guidelines for Americans** recommend **limiting sodium to less than 2,300 mg a day** or 1,500 mg if you're age 51 or older, have family history of heart disease, or have high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic kidney disease.
- **The average American gets 3,400 mg or more of sodium per day** – this is far more than the recommended amount. Sodium not only comes from table salt, it's also found in many foods that you may not realize are high in sodium.
- **Processed and prepared foods contain high sodium levels** since they are processed to last for a long period of time and sodium is typically the main preservative. These foods include frozen prepared meals, pizza, cold cuts and soups (unless they're specified to be low in sodium).
- **Some foods have a higher sodium content naturally.** Some of these foods include cottage cheese, milk and shellfish. One serving of milk contains over 200 mg of sodium.

- **Cooking and condiments also contain sodium.** Sodium can add up when you're cooking and using condiments. For example, one tablespoon of teriyaki sauce contains over 1,000 mg of sodium. Ketchup is also high in sodium.

As a registered dietitian, I have to admit that I've never been a fan of switching salts for salt substitutes. This is because table salt comprises sodium chloride, which will put a strain on the body when consumed in excess, and salt substitutes comprise potassium chloride, which can also put a strain on the kidneys and heart when consumed in excess.

So, is there a place in a healthy diet for a salt substitute? Before learning about AlsoSalt salt substitute (www.alsosalt.com), I would have said no. However, our research has found that AlsoSalt is superior to mainstream salt substitutes for several reasons, and this is why Service Foods now provides it to our clients. I would recommend AlsoSalt to individuals who have been told by a health professional to cut salt from their diets but truly enjoy the taste of it. Unlike most salt substitutes, AlsoSalt doesn't have a metallic aftertaste because it contains the amino acid lysine, which acts as a taste enhancer. Lysine is also an essential amino acid, meaning it's an amino acid our bodies need but cannot produce and therefore must be supplied in the diet. Another benefit of AlsoSalt is its potassium content; it contains half the potassium of mainstream brands, therefore decreasing strain on the kidneys and heart. You can cook, bake and season food with AlsoSalt; however, keep in mind that just like table salt, AlsoSalt should be used in moderation.

For individuals who haven't been told to avoid salt for medical reasons but choose to avoid it as a healthy choice, there is another all-natural salt substitute option. The Original Himalayan Crystal Salt® (www.himalayancrystalsalt.com) has numerous health benefits, mainly because Himalayan salt is far superior to table salt and even sea salt.

By the time it reaches you, table salt has been stripped of all its natural elements. It is processed, bleached and only comprises sodium chloride, which is a potentially detrimental compound. In order for the body to metabolize table salt crystals and use the minerals in the salt, it must use an abundant amount of energy and liquids to break down the structure and absorb the minerals. This process requires the body to use more resources than it gains from consuming the salt – thus creating a net loss. Furthermore, many of these minerals in table salt cannot be absorbed and result in deposits and blockages in the body.

Sea salt contains more minerals than table salts, although the mineral content varies depending on the source of the sea salt. The overall structure of sea salt is better than table salt, but it's still not always optimal for health. Currently, the largest concern with sea salt is the increasing pollution of the sea water, which is contaminating the quality of most sea salt with toxins that are harmful to the body.

For these reasons and more, Service Foods has chosen to provide Original Himalayan Crystal Salt® to our clients. It contains 84 trace minerals in nearly the same ratios which exist in our blood. The crystal minerals found in Himalayan Crystal Salt are in ionic form, meaning they are charged and can be absorbed directly into a cell instead of through the blood stream like the body does with food.

The salts are derived from the Himalayan Mountains and are the mineral salt crystals that were created 250 million years ago. A legacy of ancient oceans, trapped after tectonic plate movement and subsequent evaporation, Himalayan Crystal Salt contains 84 minerals vital for human health. These minerals include sodium, chloride, potassium, calcium, magnesium, iodine, iron, zinc and manganese.

The balanced crystalline structure of Himalayan Crystal Salt is also highly absorbable and can be easily metabolized by the body, resulting in a net gain the body's energy and resources. Each mineral in the body performs a variety of important roles, with the combination of all 84 minerals building a healthy foundation. Because of the depleted mineral reserves in soils, non-sustainable farming practices and pesticides that inhibit the uptake of certain minerals, vegetables, fruit and animal products are no longer the complete source of minerals that they once were to humans. However, supplementing our diets with Himalayan Crystal Salt is a natural way to replenish the minerals we are no longer getting through our foods.

Cutting back on processed salts and incorporating a high-quality salt substitute like AlsoSalt or Original Himalayan Crystal Salt® is a great way to reduce the risk of developing chronic disease.

Sources:

Dr. Gourmet's Food Reviews: <http://www.drgourmet.com/newsletter/reviews/092807.shtml>

Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sodium/NU00284>

Original Himalayan Crystal Salt®: <http://www.himalayancrystalsalt.com/clinical-research.html>

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