



Excess salt is in more  
foods than you think!  
It's time to reduce your  
sodium intake.



Excess salt puts us at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, and kidney disease. Take the pledge to reduce the sodium you eat!



[www.heart.org/SODIUM](http://www.heart.org/SODIUM)

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## Campaign Overview

**Campaign Sponsor:** American Heart Association / American Stroke Association

**Background:** Americans eat more than 3,400 milligrams of sodium, on average, daily—more than double the amount that the American Heart Association recommends for ideal heart health. Sodium is an essential nutrient, but this amount is far too high and can increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and other health problems. Americans can take steps to lower their sodium intake and support the reduction of the high levels of sodium in the food supply.

### Campaign Objectives:

- Increase awareness of Americans' excess sodium intake and its impact on health.
- Inspire behavior change and drive consumer habits leading to reduced dietary sodium intake.
- Build an army of passionate and willing supporters to activate with decision makers to demand less sodium in the food supply.

**Campaign Purpose:** This campaign aims to raise awareness of Americans' excess sodium intake and its impact on health, and to motivate consumers to reduce their personal sodium intake and to demand less sodium in the food supply. The tagline, "I Love You Salt, But You're Breaking My Heart" conveys the concept that we all have a relationship with salt, but it's not a healthy one—and we need to break up with excess salt so we can live healthier lives. The campaign's online presence is [heart.org/sodium](http://heart.org/sodium). This website will provide information about sodium and health, and tips for reducing sodium intake using a quiz, a blog authored by a registered dietitian, and other educational content such as infographics and articles.

### Target Audience:

- Moms and health-conscious individuals (Primary)
- At-risk populations, including multicultural ones; and activists (Secondary)

**Calls-to-Action—act on these calls at [heart.org/sodium](http://heart.org/sodium) and share them with your friends:**

- Take the pledge to reduce the sodium you eat
- Watch the video to learn how salt sneaks up on you
- Upload a photo and/or story about your efforts to break up with excess salt
- Read the Salty Scoop blog and leave a comment

### Talking Points:

- Even if you don't use the salt shaker, you're probably getting too much sodium. More than 75 percent of the sodium we eat is added to processed, prepackaged, and restaurant foods before we buy them.
- Over time, your taste buds can adjust to prefer less salt. Research has shown that when people eat a lower-sodium diet over time, they begin to prefer those foods and foods they used to like taste too salty.
- You can reduce the sodium you eat by comparing labels of similar products and choosing the one with less sodium, and using herbs, spices, citrus juices, and vinegars instead of salt to add flavor to foods.

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## Sodium Key Messaging

Americans' love for salt is having a dramatic impact on their health. The average American takes in more than **3,400 milligrams of sodium** each day—almost 2,000 milligrams more than the AHA recommends. Sodium is an essential nutrient and a little salt can be part of a healthy diet, but the amounts we are eating are far too high and can increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and other health problems.

- Cardiovascular disease is the **leading cause of death** and disability worldwide, and high blood pressure is one of the major risk factors.
- **High blood pressure is the leading risk factor** of women's deaths in the U.S., and the second leading risk factor for death for men.
- **One-third of American adults** have high blood pressure, and about **90 percent** of American adults are expected to develop high blood pressure over their lifetimes.
- More than **40 percent of non-Hispanic black adults** have high blood pressure. Not only is high blood pressure more prevalent in blacks than whites, but it also develops earlier in life.

The biggest contributor to our sodium consumption? It's not the salt shaker. More than **75 percent of sodium consumption** is from processed, prepackaged, and restaurant foods. This makes it hard for people to choose foods with less sodium and to limit how much sodium they are eating because it is already added to their food before they buy it. Any meaningful strategy to reduce sodium intake at the population level must involve the efforts of food manufacturers, food processors, and restaurant industries. Successful sodium reduction requires action and partnership at all levels—individuals, healthcare providers, professional organizations, public health agencies, governments, and industry.

### Other Sodium Facts:

- Too much salt can **damage blood vessels** over time, paving the way for high blood pressure.
- Blood pressure rises with age, and **eating less sodium now** will help to blunt that rise and also reduce the risk of developing other conditions, such as kidney disease, that are associated with eating too much sodium.
- Results from one study showed that more people reported **headaches** when eating higher-sodium diets than lower-sodium diets.
- Excess sodium can make the body retain extra water, which may cause **bloating**.
- Children ages 1-18 are at risk of developing heart disease and elevated blood pressure at an earlier age, because nearly 80 percent of 1 to 3-year-olds and more than 90 percent of 4 to 18-year-olds eat too much sodium.
- **Kids who have high sodium diets** are about 40 percent more likely to have elevated blood pressure than kids who have lower sodium diets.
- **Taste preferences** for salty foods may be established early in life, so children's preference for salt may be reduced if they are exposed to lower sodium diets at a young age.

### Tips to Reduce Your Sodium:

- Compare labels of similar products and choose the one with the lowest amount of sodium; limit intake of processed, prepackaged and restaurant foods; control portion sizes; and cook at home more—use herbs, spices, citrus juices, and vinegars instead of salt to add flavor to foods.
- Visit [heart.org/sodium](http://heart.org/sodium) for more information, recipes, and tips for reducing sodium.

## E-Communications Samples

In addition to including a blurb in newsletters, we encourage you to send individual, stand-alone communications to your lists about the sodium campaign. It is more likely that individuals will take action if they receive a stand-alone communication about the campaign as opposed to just seeing a blurb about it in a longer newsletter.

### Newsletter Article Content:

**Subject:** Salt is sneaky—watch out for excess salt in your foods!

Did you know that most Americans eat more than twice the American Heart Association's recommended amount of sodium? Chances are, that includes you—even if you rarely pick up the salt shaker. The worst part is, most of us don't even realize how much salt we're taking in. **But sure enough, Salt is sneaking up on us—mostly when we go out to restaurants or eat packaged foods.** Check out this new 1-minute video to see for yourself:

<http://bit.ly/1trMjLv>

It's true; many of us love salt. In fact, sodium is an essential nutrient! But the excess amounts we're eating put us at risk for elevated blood pressure which means an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. As much as we might have an affinity for salt, it's just not worth the cost to our hearts. There are plenty of other ways to enjoy tasty food with less salt. Check out our new website, <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn>, to get the 411 on sodium, including our blog, quiz, infographics, links to recipes and more.

**That's why the American Heart Association is kicking off a new campaign, "I love you salt, but you're breaking my heart." Stand up for your health and pledge to reduce your sodium intake today! Take the pledge here: <http://bit.ly/1zrYF6R>**

Thank you,

**[INSERT CONTACT NAME]**

### Follow-Up Email Message 1:

**Subject:** We're watching for sneaky Salt, and you should too.

Dear **[NAME]**,

We're keeping our eye on sneaky Salt. Are you going to join us?

You see, for years, Salt has been sneaking into Americans' diets—especially when we go to restaurants or eat packaged foods, *not* through a salt shaker. In fact, most of us eat more than double what is ideal for heart health. And it's wreaking havoc on our hearts by contributing to high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. **If we start replacing or reducing some of the sodium in our diets, we could help to turn this trend around** (<http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn>)

How can you reduce the sodium you eat? **Learn where Salt is hiding so you know how to be more aware of him.** (<http://bit.ly/TVzybC>)

Some of America's most popular foods contribute a lot of sodium to our diets. "The Salty Six" may seem like unlikely culprits, but some contain up to half of the daily recommended sodium. Breads? Poultry? Sandwiches? Yes. Too much, too often could cause you to experience negative effects, such as bloating or high blood pressure. Remember, a healthier you is *always* within reach.

Will you join us in watching out for sneaky Salt? **Start by pledging to reduce your sodium intake today!** (<http://bit.ly/1zrYF6R>)

Thank you,  
**[INSERT CONTACT NAME]**

### **Follow-Up Email Message 2:**

**Subject:** You probably don't know...

Dear **[NAME],**

Think you know how much sodium you eat? A recent AHA survey shows that you may have no idea!

Ninety-seven percent of people surveyed by the AHA either underestimated—more than half were off by around 1,000 mg—or could not estimate their sodium consumption. In light of that fact that most Americans eat more than twice as much sodium as the AHA recommends for ideal heart health, the fact that they have no idea may pose a big problem for their health; excess sodium can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.

It's time for all of us to get a better handle on how much sodium we eat. **You can start by taking our quiz to find out how much you know about your sodium intake.** (<http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn>)

Then join the hundreds of other Americans who are reducing their sodium intake by **signing the pledge today!** (<http://bit.ly/1zrYF6R>)

Thank you,  
**[INSERT CONTACT NAME]**



## Social Media Sample Messaging

The messages below were drafted to promote the sodium reduction campaign on Facebook, Twitter, and Google+.

### Twitter:

- #DYK: 77 percent of the sodium America consumes comes from processed, prepackaged, and restaurant foods. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/1w6kYuk> #SneakySalt
- It's not about the salt shaker. You're getting more sodium than you need, mostly through some prepackaged and restaurant foods. Check out the facts here: <http://bit.ly/1w6kYuk>
- Too much Salt has sneaky health impacts. Replace salt with herbs & spices to flavor your foods & keep your heart healthy! <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn>
- Reduce your salt intake and protect your heart by getting the Salty Scoop: <http://bit.ly/1qO3O4Y> #SneakySalt
- We need less salt in our prepackaged foods—our health depends on it! <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn> RT if you watch for #SneakySalt!
- Too much salt? Americans eat 3,400+ mg of sodium every day—way more than recommended. Salt's everywhere—see for yourself: <http://bit.ly/1trMjLv>
- Sure, we love Salt...but we don't realize he sneaks into processed, prepackaged, and restaurants foods! <http://bit.ly/1trMjLv> #SneakySalt
- Salt is everywhere! <http://bit.ly/1trMjLv>—now THAT'S scary. #SneakySalt
- Don't let Salt sneak up on you. <http://bit.ly/1trMjLv> #SneakySalt
- Think you have a healthy diet? Take our quiz to see how sodium-savvy you are: <http://bit.ly/1mk5Cl3> #SneakySalt
- Eating less sodium NOW can vastly improve your future health! Take the quiz to test your knowledge and learn how! <http://bit.ly/1zrYF6R>
- Your friends need to know—too much sodium is harmful to our health! Share this video with them now! <http://bit.ly/1trMjLv>
- Want to spread the word about #SneakySalt? Share our cover photo with your followers!
- #SneakySalt is in foods where we least expect him! Check out common salty foods, and tell us which ones surprised you. <http://bit.ly/TVzybC>
- Think you're worth your salt? Check out our sodium myths infographic – did any of these catch you by surprise? <http://bit.ly/TVzybC>
- Salt, you're breaking our hearts! Studies show too much #salt can lead to heart disease: <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn> #SneakySalt
- Too much salt breaking your heart? Take the AHA's pledge to reduce the sodium you eat <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn> #SneakySalt
- Worried about the #sodium in your diet? Pledge to reduce your salt intake here: <http://bit.ly/1zrYF6R>

### Facebook:

- We've been learning a lot about our relationship with Salt lately, and it's not all good. In fact, Salt is sneaking up on us. See for yourself: `<iframe width="640" height="360" src="//www.youtube.com/embed/YR81aziXRfw" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>`

- Some people think too much salt is something to scream about. We tend to agree: **<iframe width="640" height="360" src="//www.youtube.com/embed/YR81aziXRfw" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>**
- Too much sodium can be harmful to your heart and overall health. Luckily, there are plenty of ways to cut back. Get the Salty Scoop now! <http://bit.ly/1qO3O4Y>
- Did you know the majority of your sodium doesn't come from a salt shaker? It comes from processed, prepackaged, and restaurant foods! Discover all the latest facts on sodium here: <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn>
- Slash your sodium intake by cooking more at home and using herbs, spices, citrus juices, and vinegars instead of salt to flavor your meals. You can help friends and family live healthy, too, by clicking SHARE now! <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn>
- Sneaky Salt is finding his way into our diets and increasing our risk of heart disease and stroke. **<iframe width="640" height="360" src="//www.youtube.com/embed/YR81aziXRfw" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>**
- Want more info about keeping your sodium levels healthy? Visit <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn> to learn more & take a pledge to reduce your salt intake. Watching for too much salt has long term benefits for your health!
- How is your relationship with salt going? If you're like most other Americans, it's unhealthy, and you may not even realize it. Take our quiz to find out if your relationship with salt needs couples therapy! <http://bit.ly/1mk5CI3>
- Hey everyone! We're trying to get the word out that our nation needs to break up with excess salt! Share this with your friends so they can be aware of Sneaky Salt too!
- Eating too much sodium can lead to high blood pressure, putting you at risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke. By taking our pledge to reduce your sodium intake, you can help lead us to a heart-healthier future. <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn>
- How much salt is too much? The average American eats more than 3,400 mg of sodium every day, more than twice as much than the **@AmericanHeartAssociation – My Heart. My Life** recommends! Take our quiz to learn how sodium impacts your heart: <http://bit.ly/1mk5CI3>
- Help more people realize just how sneaky salt is! Print our infographics and put them up in your community! <http://bit.ly/TVzybC>

#### Google+:

- Sodium is everywhere, and most of the time, you may not even realize it! Watch our newest #video to see where excess salt is sneaking into your food: **<iframe width="640" height="360" src="//www.youtube.com/embed/YR81aziXRfw" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>**
- Fact: A population drop in sodium consumption to 1,500 mg/day could result in a 25.6 percent overall decrease in blood pressure. Want more sodium facts? Check out our website for the latest info on sodium and heart health! <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn>
- We all have our own stories—share yours! Tell us how you or a family member cut back on sodium for a healthier heart. Your experience could inspire others to watch for sodium too! <http://bit.ly/1q29SZY> #ShareYourStory #SneakySalt
- Help get your community involved! Print our infographics and post them around your neighborhood so more people learn the truth about salt! <http://bit.ly/TVzybC>
- Every voice makes a difference in the fight against heart disease! Take the #pledge to show that you're taking a stand to reduce your #sodium intake. <http://bit.ly/1qDIBKn>

## Public Service Announcements

Below are sample 15-, 30- and 60-second PSA scripts.

### Sample PSAs

**:15**

**PERSON:** THIS IS IMPORTANT: I JUST LEARNED THAT EACH DAY, THE AVERAGE AMERICAN CONSUMES MORE THAN TWICE AS MUCH SODIUM THAN THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDS. I LOVE YOU SALT, BUT YOU'RE BREAKING MY HEART, AND I'M DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT! TAKE THE PLEDGE TO WATCH YOUR SODIUM INTAKE, TOO, AT HEART DOT ORG SLASH SODIUM!

**:30**

**PERSON 1:** [HAPPY WHISTLING]

**PERSON 2:** HEY! WE HAVEN'T CAUGHT UP IN A WHILE. HOW'S LIFE?

**PERSON 1** [EXCITED]: LIFE IS GOOD! I RECENTLY STARTED EATING FOOD WITH LESS SALT, AND I FEEL GREAT!

**PERSON 2:** LESS SALT? BUT YOU ALREADY EAT SO HEALTHY!

**PERSON 1:** I THOUGHT SO TOO, BUT SALT HAS BEEN SNEAKING INTO MY DIET IN UNEXPECTED FOODS LIKE BREAD, POULTRY, AND SANDWICHES, TO NAME A FEW. BY WATCHING THE FOODS I EAT, I'M SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING THE CHANCES OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, HEART DISEASE, AND STROKE.

**PERSON 2:** I HAD NO IDEA SALT WAS SO SNEAKY!

**PERSON 1:** NEITHER DID I, BUT I'M DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT, AND YOU CAN TOO: GO TO HEART DOT ORG SLASH SODIUM AND TAKE THE PLEDGE TO REDUCE THE SODIUM YOU EAT AND START LIVING HEALTHIER!

**:60**

**[DRAMATIC MUSIC]**

**PERSON:** I JUST CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE!

**SALT:** BUT WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER SO LONG.

**PERSON:** YOU'RE BREAKING MY HEART, SALT.

**SALT:** BUT YOU NEED ME.

**PERSON:** I'VE JUST LEARNED I NEED [DRAMATIC PAUSE] *LESS* OF YOU, SALT. BECAUSE OF YOU, I'M BLOATED, AND MY BLOOD PRESSURE IS ON THE RISE. BECAUSE OF THAT, MY RISK OF HEART ATTACKS, STROKE, AND KIDNEY DISEASE HAS INCREASED. I CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE.

**SALT [EXAGGERATED]:** WHAT?

**PERSON:** I LOVE YOU SALT, BUT YOU'RE BREAKING MY HEART!

**SALT:** BUT WHY NOW?

**PERSON [CONFIDENTLY]:** NINETY PERCENT OF ALL AMERICAN ADULTS ARE EXPECTED TO DEVELOP HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE IN THEIR LIFETIME, SO I JUST CAN'T CONTINUE THIS WAY ANYMORE. PLUS, YOU'RE SNEAKY. SEVENTY-SEVEN PERCENT OF THE SODIUM AMERICANS EAT COMES FROM PROCESSED, PREPACKAGED, AND RESTAURANT FOODS—*NOT* THE SALT SHAKER! SALT, I JUST TOOK THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION'S PLEDGE TO BREAK UP WITH YOU, AND I'M SPREADING THE WORD.

**SALT [BLUBBERING]:** BUT...BUT...

**[DRAMATIC MUSIC FADES]**

**PERSON:** YOU—YOU OUT THERE LISTENING. GO TO HEART DOT ORG SLASH SODIUM AND TAKE THE PLEDGE TO START WATCHING FOR SODIUM. BREAK UP WITH EXCESS SALT TO LIVE HEALTHIER TODAY!

## Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor (LTEs) offer a unique opportunity for supporters to self-identify with our cause while reaching an entire community. LTEs also make our message relatable because they come from a real person in the community: their neighbor.

We want to make it as easy as possible for our supporters to submit LTEs, so make sure to share the messaging points below with them. Whether that's sharing the following information in a blog post or an email, we want to provide them with the tools they need to write a strong message.

It's important that an LTE reflects the voice of the person submitting, so we have not provided an exact template, but instead, talking points and an outline of what a supporter should include, alongside instructions on how to submit LTEs once finished. **When sharing the information below with supporters, make sure to remind writers that they must write in their own words, not with words copied from outside sources.**

### Tips for Supporters Writing and Submitting an LTE:

- Visit your local newspaper's website to learn how to submit your LTE. If necessary, give the editor a call and ask the preferred method of submission.
- Make sure you leave your name and contact information (including phone number) when you submit your LTE. The newspaper will need to contact you to verify you truly submitted the letter before they can publish it.
- Keep LTEs short. Try to keep your message around 175 words. Some newspapers may have word limits for LTEs, check with the editor to find out.
- Use your own words. LTEs are impactful because they're *your* perspective. When you use language from an outside source that is not authentic to you, the LTE not only loses its power, but there is a risk it could be considered plagiarism.
- Let us know if your LTE gets published by passing along a link or copy of it.

### What to Include in Your LTE:

- **Share your story:** If you have a story related to sodium and its impact on health, consider sharing it so readers can make a personal connection from the start. Make sure you explain why watching the amount of sodium you consume has already changed you for the better, and has long-term health benefits.
- **State your intent:** Right after you share your story, state your intent: to get more people to watch the video and pledge to reduce the sodium they eat on [heart.org/sodium](https://www.heart.org/sodium).
- **Back up your intent with facts and share tips:** Use the talking points below to help shape your LTE.

- **Restate your intent:** Urge people in your community to join you and make the commitment to say NO to a higher risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and other health problems. Watching for sodium has long term health benefits, and we need your help to help spread the word. Make sure to direct them to [heart.org/sodium](http://heart.org/sodium) so they can take the pledge and learn how they can get involved.

### Talking Points:

- The average American takes in more than **3,400 milligrams of sodium** each day—almost 2,000 milligrams more than the American Heart Association recommends for ideal heart health.
- Strong evidence has **linked excess sodium intake to the development of elevated blood pressure**, which increases the risk of heart attacks, stroke, and kidney disease.
- More than **77 percent of sodium consumption** is from processed, prepackaged, and restaurant foods.
- **Less sodium in the diet can help halt the rise in blood pressure** that occurs as we age, and will also reduce the risk of developing other conditions, such as kidney disease, associated with excess sodium consumption.
- **Reduce your sodium intake by:**
  - Reading the nutrition facts label to compare and find foods lower in sodium. You'll be surprised to find that even foods in the same category have different amounts of sodium.
  - Looking for “no salt added” versions of canned vegetables and beans, and if you can't find that version, drain and rinse vegetables and beans to remove some of the sodium. Watch out for frozen vegetables with salty sauces.
  - Limiting portion sizes of prepackaged and restaurant foods.