



Chapter 2

Pledge to Cut Off Too Much Salt

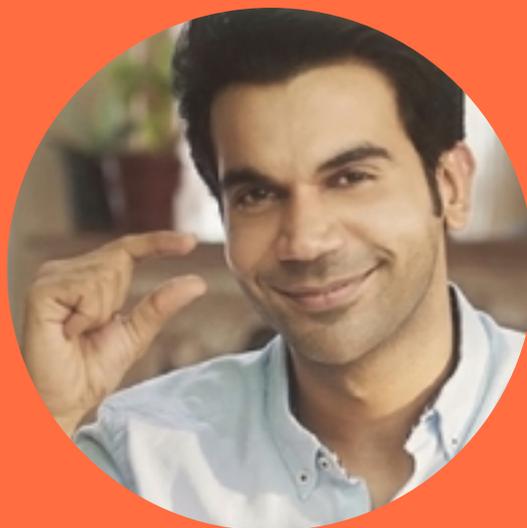
When **Rajkummar Rao** says it, you just listen. When experts talk about its importance, you just think about it.

But it's only when your heart begins to get affected by it, then you actually take action.

Why wait for the damage to happen before understanding its importance.

We are talking about

Aaj se 'Namak' Thoda Kam



The Truth

In spite the flak it has been receiving, a little salt is indispensable for a healthy, balanced diet. Salt (sodium chloride, NaCl) helps regulate body's water balance, keep muscles functioning and helps conduct nerve impulses. In short, salt is essential for life.

How much do we need?

Different people spout different figures for our daily requirement of salt but experts worldwide thankfully are unanimous about it. WHO recommends a safe intake of 2000 mg of sodium = 5 g (1 tsp) a day.

Eating excess of salt will only add to the health troubles and unfortunately, that is exactly what we are doing, often unwittingly, every day. It's time to look at just how much salt we are eating every day.



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~~SALT~~ +
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Are we eating **too much**?

Ask people what they know about salt and sodium, most don't know and often underestimate how much sodium they are getting. In fact, on an average, Indians are consuming two times the recommended daily intake i.e. more than 2 tsp of salt, (approximately 10g per day) the recommended daily intake i.e. 1tsp of salt approximately 5g per day.. It is not just the salt we add to our food while cooking, the sodium can come from salt and other chemical additives which are added to processed and restaurant foods. Foods naturally also contain some sodium. This make it hard to stay within the recommended limits. The truth is unshakeable: Most of us get way too much sodium through food.

Why **you need to pay attention**?

Remember, that uncomfortable bloating feeling when your rings get stuck and your waist swells a few inches suddenly could also be due to the skewed sodium-potassium balance in the body; too much sodium makes the body retain water and bloat up. Salt has a direct connect with high blood pressure (hypertension). Too much sodium causes your body to retain water, putting an extra burden on your heart and blood vessels, which may lead to high blood pressure (BP).

High BP is an important risk factor for stroke, so keeping salt low is important to keep debilitating and often fatal strokes away too. Globally more than a million people die every year from heart attacks and stroke

Finally, excess sodium can even weaken your bones as it leads to leaching of calcium from the skeleton, priming you for early osteoporosis



Less Salt



Trim it!

Smart strategies

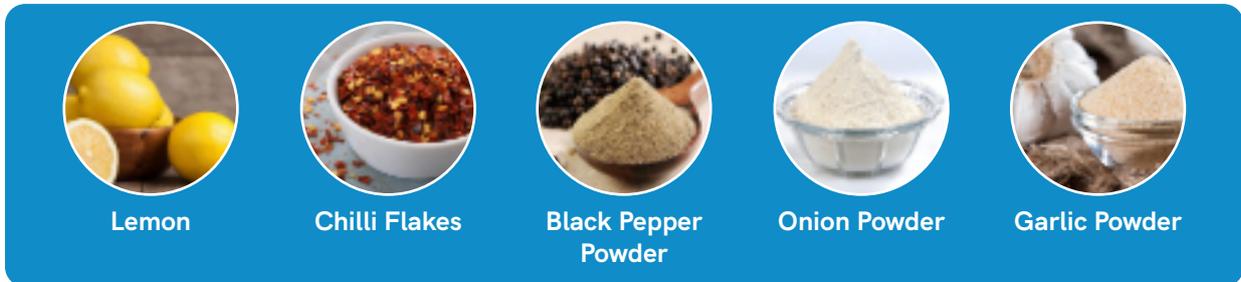
- ▶ Make gradual reduction in salt intake to let the taste buds adapt better.
- ▶ Have more water. Excess sodium will get excreted out with water.
- ▶ Eat more potassium rich foods like fruits, vegetables and coconut water (to balance out sodium).
- ▶ Don't keep the salt shaker on the table.

Read labels carefully

- ★ Packaged foods are big culprits in adding sodium to our diet. Sodium is there in everything from canned foods to papads, to even ketchups and bread, biscuits and cookies. As per FSSAI's advertising claims
 - **Low Sodium:** Product contains not more than 0.12 g of sodium per 100 g for solids or 100 ml for liquids. Very low Sodium: Product contains not more than 0.04 g of sodium per 100 g for solids or 100 ml for liquids.
 - **Sodium free:** Product contains not more than 0.005g of sodium per 100 g for solids or 100 ml for liquids.
- ★ Limit your intake of pickles, chutneys, sauces, papads and namkeens.
- ★ Eat unsalted nuts.
- ★ Look out for regular high sodium suspects like cured meats - salami, bacon, ham and sausages and steer clear of Mono-sodium Glutamate (MSG or ajinomoto). Skip or avoid them.
- ★ Limit intake of foods described as brined, pickled, barbecued, cured or smoked as they tend to be higher in salt.
- ★ Say no to HFSS or unhealthy food; a few slices of pizza or canned soups can send your sodium skyrocketing.
- ★ Cook from scratch or use minimally processed foods which are additive free... De-emphasize the use of processed foods. Avoid readymade soup premixes and batters, masala mixes, and instant meals. They tend to be high in sodium.

Add flavor not salt

- ★ Switch to alternative flavorings: wedges of cut lemon/lemon juice, chilli flakes and black pepper powder, onion powder and garlic powder are good options.



Herbs like coriander, parsley, mint, oregano, thyme, and basil work well too. Try this: mix 5 parts roasted and powdered sesame seeds with 1 part salt, and use as a flavoring. Adds an interesting flavour to food.

- ★ Avoid highly salted flavorings like stock cubes and gravy granules and foods like crisps, salted nuts, popcorns, savory snacks and soups – they are all high in salt.

Cook Smart

- ★ Monitor added salt during cooking. In India, more than 80% of salt comes from salt added during cooking. Track and monitor the consumption of salt at home - buy and use only a fixed quantity every month and try further reducing the quantity.
- ★ Do not add salt to rice or atta when making chapatis.
- ★ Eat fruits and salads without adding salt. Avoid sprinkling salt on curd too.
- ★ Use more fresh produce as they are rich in other nutrients which balances the sodium.
- ★ Add salt after the food is cooked, it gives more salty taste with less salt.
- ★ Look for ways to pair salted foods with unsalted or less salted foods, for example, have dal that has salt with rice without salt, etc.
- ★ Focus on high umami foods. These foods are high in a compound called L-Glutamate (a flavour enhancer) that triggers our umami or savory taste receptors. Chicken and meat broths together with fermented foods, fish, soya bean, mushrooms, tomatoes, seaweeds and carrots are examples of umami foods/ingredients.

The Good Work

Aj Se Thoda Kam Campaign of FSSAI aimed at nudging people to reduce their salt, sugar and fat intake is delivering the message very effectively, and educating people through communication material and a TVCs featuring actor Rajkummar Rao.

A meaningful all round strategy to reduce salt consumption across populations containing all elements of the WHO's SHAKE salt reduction package is being followed aggressively.

FSSAI launched an innovative challenge-The Salt Challenge: Every Pinch Counts in November 2019, where they invited suggestions from nutrition professionals and students all over India for cutting down salt intake at home and restaurant cooked food. The competition received an overwhelming response from every corner of the country in a span of just 10 days

Success Story shared by 'ICMR-NIRT Staff Canteen' at Chennai: They have successfully implemented following strategies to reduce salt intake:

- ▶ No salt is added in idli and dosa batter before cooking for breakfast.
- ▶ No salt is added in boiled white rice during preparation for lunch.
- ▶ No salt is added in buttermilk, served along with afternoon meals.
- ▶ Instead of pappad/ appalam (which contains salt) along with meals, customers are offered option of having green salad with lemon. (Which instead has resulted in reduction in papad consumption in 1/3rd of staffs.
- ▶ Request to avoid pickle or to take less pickle, which is salty and nor-mally served along with afternoon meals. (This advisory has resulted in 3/4th reduction in pickle consumption overall).
- ▶ Request to avoid or add less salt to curd rice in lunch

Suggestions received during the challenge:

- ▶ Use of unsalted butter, use of groundnut powder, tamarind pulp, amla, garlic powder, onion powder, carrom seeds, coconut milk, coconut powder, mushroom powder. Undaria and dulse species of Brown seaweed delivers umami flavour to the food
- ▶ Many herb /spice mix which were suggested from different regions as an alternate to salt e.g. Podi using toor dal, garlic, chillies, tamarind, rosemary and curry leaves and using dried coriander, jeera, bengal gram, chilly, pepper, cloves, lemon zest, vinegar, oregano, dried lemon powder, kokum, dried beetroot powder, and cinnamon can be added to reduce the salt in the dish.
- ▶ Oils infused with garlic, chilli, lemon can be a wonderful replacement for butter, salted butter, and soy sauce.
- ▶ Salt substitutes, which consist of other mineral salts, can impart a salty flavour to food. Potassium chloride (KCl) is the most popular choice as a feasible salt replacer.
- ▶ Prepare poriyal with adding roasted groundnut powder instead of salt.
- ▶ Replace traditional pickles and sauces with pickled vegetables (cucumber and carrot soaked in vinegar).



More is being done

◆ There are some more effective proposals in the pipeline:

The Eat Right campaign (somewhere it's written as a movement and somewhere a campaign - let's maintain consistency) is working towards reducing the salt content of packaged foods as that helps change the food environment without requiring consumer action, making the healthy choice the default. It seems possible looking at the example of Kuwait, the largest manufacturer of bread, which has successfully reduced the salt content of bread by 20%.

Focused advocacy is on to garner with support by civil society, researchers, and scientific associations to encourage industry to participate, ensure support across government, consumers and industry.

◆ Low Sodium Salts

Low-sodium salt is a specially formulated salt that provides lower sodium than ordinary salt by partial replacement of sodium chloride with potassium, magnesium and calcium compounds. It is generally consumed by people with hypertension and high blood pressure. FSSAI is under the process of setting up standards for low sodium salts in India. Presently, there are few brands of low sodium salts available in India market. Advocation of low-

sodium salts in which the sodium chloride (the harmful ingredient in salt) has been replaced with potassium chloride will help. However, it is advisable to consume it under medical supervision, and should be avoided by people with medical conditions like kidney problems, hyperkalemia etc.

People don't know or have no control over the amount of salt that they eat at restaurants; these foods are often saltier than foods cooked at home. Here displaying warning labels on foods to enable consumers to make informed choices can help. For example, New York City has introduced regulations so that large restaurant chains with 15 or more locations must display high-salt warning labels on menu items or combination meals that contain more than the recommended daily limit of sodium.

Behaviour change communication strategies must be used to educate, motivate and empower the public to achieve the objective of reducing salt consumption.

Bottom line

One must eat just adequate quantity of salt. Avoid adding extra salt at the table

Know approximately how much sodium is in a given amount of table salt
(made approximately of 40% sodium and 60% chloride):

1/4 teaspoon salt = 575 mg sodium

3/4 teaspoon salt = 1,725 mg sodium

1/2 teaspoon salt = 1,150 mg sodium

1 teaspoon salt = 2,000 mg sodium

SHAKE the SALT Habit

WHO recommended

SHAKE Technical package Surveillance: measure and monitor salt use

Harness Industry: promote reformulation of foods and meals to contain less salt.

Adopt: standards for labelling and marketing

Knowledge: educate and communicate to empower healthy eating

Environment: support settings to promote healthy eating



**Eat Less
Salt.**

