

Sodium contents of processed foods decoded

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Sodium is essential for myriad biological processes including fluid balance and muscle contraction. However, too much sodium can have harmful effects such as increasing blood pressure. Consequently, reducing sodium intake is an important health message. Because processed foods contribute the majority of dietary sodium, reducing their sodium content and overall sodium consumption are often emphasized as public health goals.

There is a wide range of [sodium content](#) among processed foods, however, which makes it difficult to monitor [sodium](#) consumption. In part to help solve this problem, researchers from The George Institute for International Health in Sydney, Australia conducted a systematic survey of the sodium contents of processed foods available in Australia. Their findings, as well as an editorial by Sonia Angell of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, can be found in the February 2010 edition of *The [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#)*.

According to American Society for Nutrition Spokesperson Roger Clemens, DrPH, "The research by Webster and colleagues is important in that these real-time data provide baseline information on the sodium content of many foods in Australia. The authors suggest this information is useful in reformulating foods to lower sodium levels, which is important for health. A food reformulation process involves several considerations, as sodium is needed for food safety and product stability. In addition, there are different flavor and sensory qualities among diverse populations. A successful sodium reduction process is likely to involve several steps, a gradual decrease in sodium such that food safety

is not compromised while attempting to reduce the risk of elevated blood pressure among those who may respond to lower [dietary sodium](#)."

This database and descriptive data provide important tools and information needed for continued monitoring of food sodium content, and the authors challenge the Australian government to "take leadership and engage the food industry in a sector-wide, transparent reformulation effort that will progressively decrease salt intake in Australia.

More information: Access the full text of the study and editorial here:
[asn-cdn-remembers.s3.amazonaws.com/.../eeb871df1b6d3c52.pdf](#)
[asn-cdn-remembers.s3.amazonaws.com/.../6fdecdae81022890.pdf](#)

Provided by American Society for Nutrition

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