



Is salt really that important?

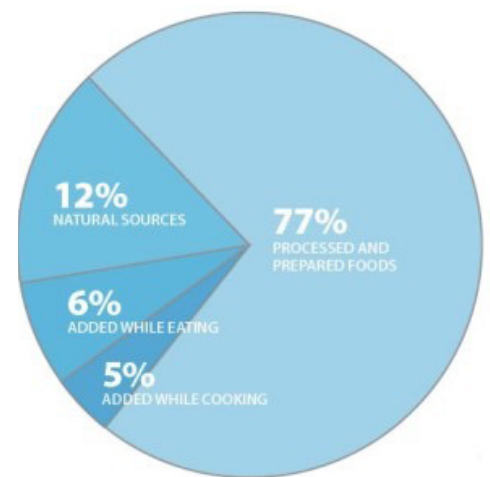
YES! Limiting salt is very important, especially for South Asians with high blood pressure. People of South Asian descent are particularly sensitive to the effects of too much salt and therefore are at higher risk of health conditions such as coronary heart disease and stroke. Salt has many negative effects on health. Of these, salt is one of the most important risk factors for high blood pressure.

High blood pressure can increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes and heart failure as well as stomach cancer, osteoporosis, and renal failure. High blood pressure is a silent killer, and usually has no obvious symptoms. In addition, once we are diagnosed with high blood pressure, our bodies hold onto the sodium more, further having a negative effect on the blood pressure.

Where does the salt in our diets come from?

In the **North American** diet, about 75% of salt comes from processed foods such as: pre-packaged foods like frozen pizza, fast foods (french fries, burgers, hot dogs and deli meats), canned goods (soups) and snack foods (potato chips, french fries, salted nuts).

Interestingly, in the **South Asian** population, in addition to the processed foods, a large amount of the salt consumed is added during cooking or at the table. Many add salt to their food without even tasting it first!



In South Asian cooking, the true level of salt added to food is often disguised by the hot spices used, or in the prepared spice mixtures available, such as MDH. Some research shows that South Asian people consume very high quantities of salt, almost 10 grams per day – this is almost three times the daily need for adults.