



## NATIONAL SALT AWARENESS WEEK

National Salt Awareness Week takes place in South Africa from March 4 to March 11. Salt is arguably the most common and essential seasoning in the world. It is even referred to as the taste or flavour of life. But, like most things, too much (or too little) of this fine seasoning can make you sick. This is why it is important to monitor your salt intake and adjust it accordingly. You'll be amazed at how many health problems you could avoid by sticking to the recommended daily salt intake.

### HISTORY SALT AWARENESS WEEK

Since long before recorded history, salt has existed and been an element of human and animal diets. Around 6050 B.C., the first mention of salt was made. Salt was recognized as a valuable product during this time, and it was traded between the Phoenicians and their Mediterranean kingdom. This rich commodity was also employed by the Egyptians in religious offerings and to preserve their mummies.

In the 6th century, the exchange rate of salt became equal to gold. This was because salt at the time was a lot rarer and mainly gotten from salt mines. Thankfully, in around 2700 B.C., the "Peng-Tzao-Kan-Mu" (perhaps the earliest study on pharmacology) was published in China and a huge part of the writing described over 40 types of salt, as well as detailed methods of salt extraction. From then on, salt production in China increased and became a major source of revenue.

Salt was greatly used in Egyptian and Greek medicine. The Egyptians' "Ebers Papyrus," a scroll of medical notes and herbal knowledge dating to around 1600 B.C., describes several salt-based remedies for treating infections and epidemic diseases. The ancient Greeks also discovered that salt aided digestion, treated skin diseases, and, when inhaled, helped manage respiratory diseases. Although more and more people started using salt as medicine, it wasn't until the 19th century that the healing properties and health effects of salt were properly studied scientifically.

### SALT AWARENESS WEEK TIMELINE

1618

#### Salt in Epsom Common

Local cowherd, Henry Wicker, discovers bitter Epsom Salt that acts as a laxative.

1777

#### Lord Howe Wins

British Lord Howe successfully captures General Washington's salt supply.

1844

#### The Winsford Salt Mine

Britain's oldest working mine, the Winsford Salt Mine, is discovered.

1930

#### The Salt March

Mahatma Gandhi begins the Salt March protest in India.



## NATIONAL SALT AWARENESS WEEK FAQs

Q: How much salt can we take in a day?

A: Adults and children 11 years and older should not take more than one teaspoon of salt per day.

Q: Is salt bad for the kidneys?

A: The kidneys work best when there is a balance of potassium and sodium in the body. A high salt intake will increase the sodium levels in the body, therefore disrupting the balance and putting a strain on the kidneys.

Q: Why does salt raise blood pressure?

A: When sodium levels in the body are high, the body starts storing more water to 'flush' the salt away. The extra water puts more pressure on the heart and narrows blood vessels.

## HOW TO OBSERVE NATIONAL SALT AWARENESS WEEK

1. Take a sodium blood test
2. Make an appointment with your healthcare practitioner for a simple sodium blood test if you haven't tested your sodium levels in a while. This will determine whether you need to reduce your salt intake or increase it.
3. Read some need-to-know facts about salt.
4. Visit trusted health websites to learn about the benefits and risks of salt. Be sure to take note of the recommended daily salt intake for adults and children!
5. Find new recipes. If you need to reduce your salt intake, or you just want to be on the safe side, look up recipes that use healthier substitutes for salt. Don't forget to share them with your loved ones and encourage them to be more mindful of what they eat.

## 5 SALTY FACTS ABOUT SALT

1. The word 'salary' was coined from salt - in ancient Rome, Roman soldiers were given a 'solarium,' which meant payment with salt.
2. Salts make up 0.4% of the body's weight - the adult human body holds 8.8 ounces of salts, most of which is sodium chloride.
3. Salt is used in soaps - soap makers use salt to harden soap bars and make them last longer.
4. Salt reduces bitterness - salt has been found to neutralize bitter taste, which is why it is often added to coffee and grapefruit.
5. Weeds can be killed with salt - salt halts grass growth by dehydrating the roots.

## WHY NATIONAL SALT AWARENESS WEEK IS IMPORTANT

1. It helps people reduce their risk of heart diseases. High sodium levels can cause high blood pressure, which increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases. National Salt Awareness Week is observed to educate people about the dangers of consuming too much salt.
2. A week to discover new ingredients. We all love salt. However, for health reasons, it is important to try new spices and seasonings. Spices like cayenne pepper, cumin, and thyme can be used instead of salt to give your food great flavor, without raising your blood sodium levels too much.
3. For the children. Children can grow up to live much healthier lives if they start and maintain a low-salt diet. This awareness week encourages parents to teach their children better eating habits.

*Please Note: This is an educational information leaflet only and should not be used for diagnosis. For more information on cholesterol, contact the care centre and speak to a registered nurse or your health care professional.*

