

# CDC finds Americans consume more than RDA for sodium so?

*By ACSH Staff — August 17, 2012*

The sodium debate has reared its head again. The question of whether the average American diet has too much, too little, or just the right amount of saltiness surfaces time and again in both the scientific literature and the press. This time, it is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention itself that has published a new [study](#) [1]. And [according](#) [2] to their researchers survey of over 12,000 U.S. adults, sodium consumption by 90 percent exceeded the daily intake recommended by the American Heart Association and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Yet as we and others have asserted before, that recommendation of 2,300 mg per day may very well be too low for most healthy adults.

The CDC study, published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, asked study participants what they had eaten during the past 24 hours. The survey looked specifically at sodium and potassium intake, given that the latter may help rid the body of unneeded sodium. The findings, which excluded table salt from its calculations, showed that most adults consume an average of 3,371 mg of sodium per day, yet consume just over half the recommended daily amount of potassium. They also found that nearly 80 percent of the sodium in the average diet comes from processed food.

Given that about one third of U.S. adults have high blood pressure, the researchers are calling for consumers to cut their sodium intake and for food manufacturers to reduce the salt levels in their products.

But [recent studies](#) [3] say such recommendations may be misguided. For instance, it was only this June that health policy researcher Gary Taubes published [a feature](#) [4] in *The New York Times* suggesting that the recommended sodium intake could do us more harm than good. Taubes discussed recent [research](#) [5] that has shown an association between a low-sodium diet and an increased risk of heart disease. As Taubes noted in his *Times* piece, experts countering the conventional wisdom about salt intake have long been seen as colluding with the food industry. But that conventional wisdom may be wrong.

As ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross notes, The only thing that this study establishes is that most of us consume more than the very low amount of sodium recommended by the USDA and AHA. There is no evidence here that the level we are consuming is harmful. And in fact, regardless of low-salt recommendations, the average sodium intake among Americans has remained steady over the last 40 years.

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**Links**

[1] <http://www.ajcn.org/content/early/2012/07/31/ajcn.112.034413.abstract>

[2] <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/08/16/us-americans-salt-idINBRE87F0ZR20120816>

[3] [http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.2597/news\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.2597/news_detail.asp)

[4] [http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.3670/news\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.3670/news_detail.asp)

[5] [http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.3197/news\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.3197/news_detail.asp)