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# STATE LEGISLATURES

 NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

HEALTH REFORM TWO YEARS LATER  
THE POLICY, POLITICS AND PROBLEMS



INSIDE:

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FUTURE

LAWMAKERS'  
ODD JOBS

TAPPING INTO  
ONLINE

Presorted Standard  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Lebanon Junction, KY  
Permit #664

# Shake the Salt Habit

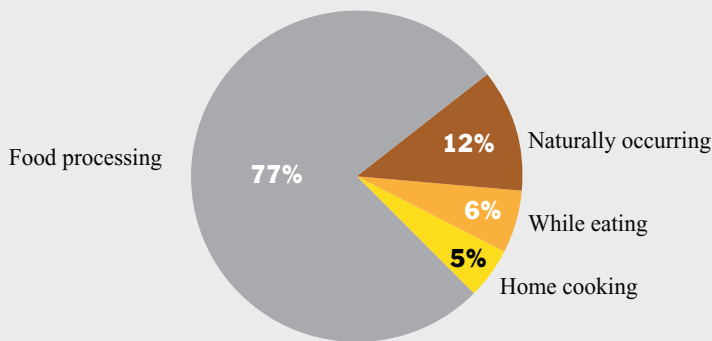
Eating too much sodium can cause high blood pressure, which raises the risk for heart disease and stroke—the first and fourth leading causes of death in this country. A third of American adults have high blood pressure, which generated \$76 billion in medical costs and lost productivity in 2010, according to the American Heart Association.

Most of us consume twice the recommended daily amount of sodium. Guidelines generally advise getting no more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium a day. But for half the population—and more than 56 percent of all adults—recommendations are 1,500 milligrams a day. That includes everyone over age 51, all African Americans, and those with diabetes, kidney disease or high blood pressure.

If everyone consumed less than 1,500 milligrams of sodium a day, it's estimated that 26 percent fewer people would have high blood pressure, and the nation would save \$26 billion in health care costs.

Americans get most of their sodium from salt in prepared or processed foods; less is added in home cooking or at the table. Common foods have a range of sodium—for example, an apple has 2 milligrams; a banana 1 milligram; a pepperoni pizza slice 520 milligrams; and a cheeseburger and small fries almost an entire day's worth—1,360 milligrams.

Sources of Sodium



A variety of laws and legislatively enabled regulations attempt to reduce sodium in the food supply, including lowering the amount of salt in foods served in schools and child care facilities or purchased by state-regulated elder and health care facilities and prisons.

Through incentives to develop grocery vendors in areas without them, at least five states provide more low sodium, high potassium fresh fruits and vegetables for our diets. Many states offer fruit and vegetable programs in schools, and new federal regulations also will improve school produce offerings. At least four states provide regulatory breaks for farm stand sellers of fresh produce; one exempts urban gardens from property tax.

At least 10 states make it easier for recipients of food stamps (SNAP) and federal Women, Infants and Children (WIC) benefits to buy low sodium foods. Other states are focusing on getting the word out through public education campaigns. Manufacturers, encouraged by state actions, are making voluntary reductions as well.

—Amy Winterfeld

## States With Laws or Regulations on Sodium

Twenty-seven states, Washington, D.C. and the Virgin Islands regulate the sodium content of foods served in certain facilities.

	SCHOOL (LIMITS)	SCHOOL (ADVISORY)	ELDER CARE	HEALTH CARE	CHILD CARE
ALABAMA	■				
ARIZONA	■				
COLORADO		■			
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	■				■
HAWAII	■				
IDAHO		■			
INDIANA <sup>1</sup>					
IOWA	■				
KENTUCKY	■		■		
LOUISIANA		■	■		
MAINE			■		
MASSACHUSETTS <sup>2</sup>	■		■	■	
MISSOURI			■		
NEVADA	■				
NEW JERSEY				■	
NEW MEXICO			■		
NORTH CAROLINA			■	■	
OHIO			■	■	
OKLAHOMA			■		
PENNSYLVANIA		■			
RHODE ISLAND	■				
SOUTH DAKOTA		■			
TENNESSEE	■				
UTAH <sup>2</sup>		■			
VERMONT		■			
VIRGINIA		■			
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS	■				
WASHINGTON <sup>1</sup>					■
WEST VIRGINIA	■				■

Notes: ■ Law ■ Regulation or state agency policy

1. Indiana and Washington regulate sodium in prison meals.
2. Massachusetts (by executive order) and Utah (and New York City) have procurement standards limiting sodium content for foods purchased by government agencies. Utah's policy is voluntary and applies only to the Department of Health.

Source: NCSL staff legal research, 2011.