

How much salt do you need?

The average teenager or adult needs just 4 grams (4g) of salt (see box, below) to meet their daily needs. However, most of us eat between 9g and 12g salt every day. The latest advice from the government's Food Standards Agency is that teenagers and adults need to cut their daily salt intake to 6g of salt in order to protect their long-term heart health.

After lots of thought and argument, the Food Standards Agency has said we should all aim to cut the amount of salt we eat each day to 6g. But why didn't they go all the way and tell us that the lower target of 4g would be even better?

Tick which of the following answers you think is true:

- The Food Standards Agency can't add up properly.
- They were nobbled.
- Government officials never go shopping.
- They thought this was more practical, because processed food, which lots of people eat, is so salty.

If the problem is that processed food is very salty, what else could the Food Standards Agency do to help people eat less salt?

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Note: Salt is made of sodium and chloride. If a food label says 'sodium', you have to multiply the number by 2.5 to work out the amount of salt.

- 1.6g of sodium x 2.5 = 4g of salt.
- 2.4g of sodium x 2.5 = 6g of salt.

