

Sodium FAQ's

The Town of Wilmington has been evaluating and monitoring our elevated levels of sodium for more than 20 years and has found that our levels have risen to six times the 20mg/l MA DEP advisory level. Health officials said there is no risk to most people, but warned that high-sodium water could be a hazard to those on low-sodium diets. It is important for Wilmington to maintain and preserve its own safe drinking water supply for its residents. The public health impact of high levels of sodium can affect those on a sodium restricted diet contributing to hypertension and stroke. High sodium levels can be of concern to infants on formula and cause hypernatremia.

What is sodium?

Sodium is a light alkali metal which will actually float on water in its pure state. However, it is very chemically active and is rarely found in its pure state. All natural waters contain sodium, as nearly all sodium compounds readily dissolve in water. Sodium is used primarily as sodium chloride (salt) and sodium sulphate (salt cake). The salting of highways to control ice and snow accounts for the largest single use of sodium chloride. Significant quantities are also used in the food processing, dairy, fishing, grain, brewing, and slaughtering and meat packing industries.

How much does water contribute to sodium in my diet?

The Food and Drug Administration state that's most American adults tend to eat between 4,000 and 6,000 mg of sodium per day, "and therapeutic sodium restricted diets can range from below 1,000 mg to 3,000 mg per day." It lists the following nutrient guidelines for food labeling:

- Low-sodium: 140 mg or less per serving (or, if the serving is 30 g or less or two tablespoons or less, 140 mg or less per 50 g of the food)
- Very low-sodium: 35 mg or less per serving (or, if the serving is 30 g or less or two tablespoons or less, 35 mg or less per 50 g of the food)
- Sodium-free: Less than 5 mg per serving

It is important to note that sodium is an essential nutrient. The Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council recommends that most healthy adults need to consume at least 500 mg/day, and that sodium intake be limited to no more than 2400 mg/day.