

April

America has a major problem: SALT!

We eat too much of it – on average more than double the amount recommended by the American Heart Association. And too much sodium means higher risk for high blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease and stroke.

So where's it all coming from? We all know it's in the chips and salt shaker, but how is it that we're eating so much of it? The big problem is, more than 75 percent of our salt comes from processed and restaurant foods.

“Excess sodium in our diets has less to do with what we're adding to our food and more to do with what's already in the food,” said Linda Van Horn, Ph.D., R.D., a research nutritionist at Northwestern University and an American Heart Association volunteer. “The average individual is getting at least five or 10 times more sodium than they need.” Here's a look at some of the saltiest foods we eat, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some on the list might surprise you.

1. Breads and rolls.
2. Cold cuts and cured meats.
3. Pizza.
4. Poultry.
5. Soup.
6. Sandwiches.

How do we shake the salt habit?

“Being conscious of food labeling in the grocery store is a good start to reducing the amount of sodium in your diet,” Dr. Van Horn said. She suggests comparing different products' sodium content and aiming to eat more fresh foods like produce, fresh meats and fish. Be sure to look for the American Heart Association's Heart- Check mark – when you see

it on a product, you know the food has been certified to meet nutritional criteria for heart-healthy foods.

“When you think of the grocery store, think of all aisles in the middle, where all the prepackaged foods are,” she said. “When you buy things that come in boxes, cans and frozen meals that is where the sodium has been added.”

