

# Food salt essential to life, health

## A growing body of research shows salt is GOOD for you ....

**Live.** Your body needs salt. You can't produce your own sodium or chloride, and salt (sodium chloride) is required for blood, sweat, tears, digestive juices and other bodily liquids. That's why you have an [innate appetite](#) for it. Your body is telling you something.

**Live longer.** A Journal of the American Medical Association [study](#) showed people with the *highest* levels of sodium in their bodies lived *longer* than people with the lowest levels.

**Live smarter.** If pregnant mothers and children eat sufficient salt, they exhibit improved cognitive function; if they eat iodized salt, they are protected from iodine deficiency, the world's leading cause of mental retardation.

**Live nutritiously.** Cruciferous vegetables – a.k.a. “super veggies” – are bitter, but they can become [tasty](#) with salt. These are the vegetables your mother made you eat: broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, kale, and cabbage.

**Live naturally.** Salt is a natural food ingredient, of the earth, with no calories.

## .... but LOW-salt diets may HARM you.

**Premature death.** [A study](#) of a federal database (NHANES) found people on LOW-salt diets are *more* likely to die prematurely. A [meta-analysis](#) of seven studies found lowering sodium did *not* lower the risk of premature death. In fact, when people with heart conditions lowered their sodium they were more likely to die prematurely.

**Risk of Diabetes.** A [Harvard study](#) linked low-salt diets to an increase in insulin resistance, a precursor to Type 2 Diabetes. Other studies show that individuals with diabetes die in greater numbers when placed on a LOW-salt diet.

**Falls, cognitive problems, among elderly.** Because of declining renal function in the aging body, the kidneys retain less sodium. Elderly people with LOW sodium, a condition called hyponatremia, have more [falls and broken hips](#) and a [decrease in cognitive abilities](#).

### Sources:

Innate appetite: J Geerling, et al (2008); Live longer: K Stolarz-Skrzypek, et al. (2011); Live nutritiously: J.K. Balitsis (2008); Premature death: HW Cohen, et al. (2008); Risk of diabetes: R Garg, et al. (2011); M Thomas, et al. (2011); E Ekinci, et al. (2011); Elderly falls, cognitive abilities: B Renneboog, et al. (2006); Flicker, et al. (2005).

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**ABOUT THE SALT INSTITUTE:** Based in Alexandria, VA, the Salt Institute is a trade association promoting responsible uses of salt, particularly for roadway safety, nutrition and water quality. See [www.saltinstitute.org](http://www.saltinstitute.org) or call 703-549-4648.