

Sodium in Drinking-Water

Sodium is a common element in the natural environment and is often found in food and drinking-water. In drinking water, sodium can occur naturally or be the result of road salt application, water treatment chemicals or ion-exchange softening units.

Sodium is not considered to be toxic. The human body needs sodium in order to maintain blood pressure, control fluid levels and for normal nerve and muscle function.

Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality

There is no health-based standard for sodium in drinking water. Only a small portion of the sodium we consume actually comes from water. Instead, the standard for sodium is based on taste. The Canadian Drinking Water Guideline for sodium is 200 mg/L. Sodium concentrations above 200 mg/L will make the water taste "salty".

Public drinking-water systems under the Safe Drinking Water Act are required to sample for sodium on a regular basis and report to the Medical Officer of Health when sodium levels exceed 20 mg/L. This information is made available to local physicians in order to help persons on sodium-restricted diets control their sodium intake.

Water quality information for public drinking-water systems can be

obtained by contacting your local water utility.

If you own a private well, you should consider testing your water for sodium at least once every 5 years, especially if the well is located near a roadway where road salt is used.

Daily Sodium Intake

Most people consume more sodium than they need to maintain good health. Healthy adults should have no more than 2300 mg of sodium per day; approximately 1 teaspoon of salt. The amount the body needs is actually much less. To promote good health in adults, 1500 mg is considered adequate. People with health issues may need to aim for significantly lower sodium intakes and should follow the advice of their physicians.

Although less than 5 to 10% of your daily intake of sodium typically comes from water, you should consult your family physician if you are on a sodium-restricted diet and have concerns about the level of sodium in your drinking water.

Sodium-Restricted Diets

To put things into perspective, if the sodium concentration in your drinking-water is 20 mg/L then drinking up to two litres of water per day would contribute only 40 mg of sodium to your diet. For healthy adults, this sodium level in drinking-water does not pose a risk. Even for

individuals on very strict sodium-restricted diets of 500 mg of sodium per day, two litres of water, would only account for 8% of their daily sodium intake.

However, if you are on a sodium-restricted diet, your doctor may recommend that you drink sodium-free packaged or bottled water, or remove sodium from your water by using a water treatment device.

Boiling water does not remove sodium and will only increase concentrations.

For more information on sodium and your diet, please see our *Take a Look At Sodium* fact sheet.

Water Softeners

Most water-softening devices use ionic exchange to replace calcium with sodium. While this reduces the hardness of your water, it may add significant amounts of sodium. If you need a water softener, consider having a separate line for drinking and cooking which by-passes the water softener.

Water treatment devices may also be installed at the kitchen tap to help remove sodium (e.g. reverse osmosis units).

For more information please call Your Health Connection at 705-721-7520 (1-877-721-7520) or visit our website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org