

MMWR Highlights

OCTOBER 20, 2011

Most Americans age 2 and older eat too much sodium per day

According to a new study in CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, the large majority of Americans eat more sodium than recommended in the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA)*. Nearly 99% of Americans who should reduce sodium intake to 1,500 milligrams (mg) daily and almost 90% of those who should consume less than 2,300 mg per day eat more than these levels. The study used data from CDC's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

Daily sodium intake much higher than recommended levels

- The *2010 DGA* states that all Americans should reduce sodium intake to less than 2,300 mg daily. Additionally, about half of Americans and the majority of adults should further reduce intake to 1,500 mg per day.
- However, about 99% of individuals who should limit sodium intake to 1,500 mg each day consume more than that, with an average intake of 3,264 mg daily—double the recommended amount.
- People who should consume 1,500 mg of sodium daily include all:
 - African Americans age 2 and older.
 - Adults age 51 and older.
 - Persons with hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease.
- As estimated in the *MMWR*, these groups include:
 - 48% of persons age 2 and older.
 - 57% of adults age 18 and older.
 - 16% of children age 2 to 17.

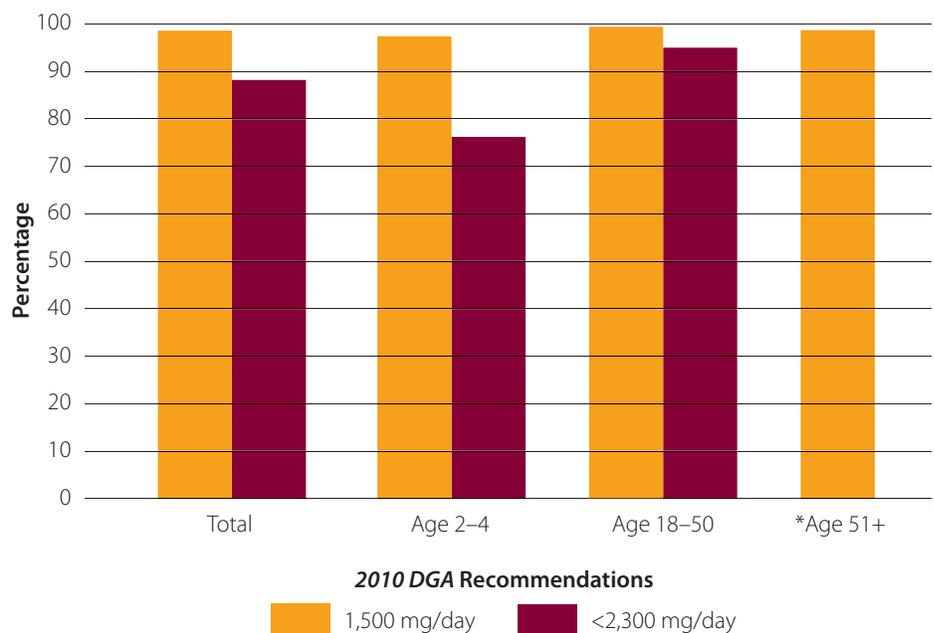
- The remaining U.S. population should consume less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day—yet almost 90% eat more than the recommended limit, with an average intake of 3,513 mg each day.

Too much sodium already in our food

- A diet high in sodium raises the risk of high blood pressure, which increases the risk for heart disease and stroke, two of the leading causes of death in the United States.
- Individuals who reduce the amount of sodium they consume can lower their blood pressure and reduce their risk for serious health problems.

- More than 75% of sodium consumed is already in packaged, processed, and restaurant foods.
- People should read nutrition labels, choose foods lower in sodium, and eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Joint efforts by the public and private sectors are needed to further enable Americans to reduce their sodium intake and risk for heart disease and stroke, such as the Million Hearts™ initiative to help prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes in the next five years (millionhearts.hhs.gov).

Figure. Percentage of persons age 2 and older who exceed the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* sodium intake recommendations



*All people age 51 and older should reduce sodium intake to 1,500 mg/day.