

Chinese takeout has so much salt it should carry a 'health warning,' UK advocacy group says

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A UK advocacy group has added a little extra salt to sodium's existing wounds.

Action on Salt, which calls for measures such as placing cautionary labels on high-salt chain restaurant foods, scrutinized the salt in Chinese food taken home from U.K. supermarkets and restaurants.

It found:

- * Some restaurant takeout meals contained as much salt as five Big Macs, which have 2.3 grams of salt each.
- * One sweet and sour dish had 3.4 grams of salt, the same as in 70 Ritz Crackers
- * Two hoisin duck spring rolls and about three teaspoons of dark soy sauce contained 3.82 grams of salt, more salt than nine servings of salted peanuts.

"Chinese meals should carry a health warning," Action on Salt said in a press release.

That comes on the heels of a March 5 report in the American Heart Association journal Hypertension, which warned that a healthy diet may not offset the effects of high sodium intake in elevating [blood pressure](#).

Researchers examined pre-existing data from 4,680 middle-age adults in the U.S., Japan, China and the UK., and found those consuming greater amounts of salt had higher blood pressure, even if the person's overall diet was healthy.

The U.S. federal government's 2015—2020 Dietary Guidelines recommend that Americans consume less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. One teaspoon of salt is roughly equal to 2,300 mg.

Most adults eat more—an average of more than 3,400 mg each day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A small amount of sodium is needed for bodies to work properly, the CDC said, but excessive amounts can put people at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Salt "is definitely one of the worse problems in the American diet," said Bonnie Liebman, director of nutrition at the food advocacy group Center for Science in the Public Interest.

Like Action on Salt, the center also wants warnings next to menu items with a day's worth or more of sodium. The American Heart Association also supports more information on menu labeling, including sodium details, and backs lowering the daily value for sodium.

And in some instances, government agencies have

joined the campaign to cut sodium consumption.

"Public health officials have started to push industry to stop dumping so much salt into our foods," says Liebman.

The New York City Board of Health requires salt shaker symbols next to chain restaurant food that has more than 2,300 mg of [sodium](#). In January, the Philadelphia City Council introduced similar legislation.

Salt industry trade group The Salt Institute, however, says the 2,300 daily recommended amount "may be on the low side of the safe range."

The group issued a press release noting that "Salt Awareness Week"—which runs from March 12 to March 18—is a time to note the nutritional value of [salt](#). Action on Salt also capitalized on "Salt Awareness Week" in releasing its Chinese food information.

"Salt is the flavor of life and this year we should all recognize its many benefits," said Salt Institution President Lori Roman in a statement.

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