

SODIUM IN DRINKING WATER

Sodium is a mineral that can be found in drinking water supplies. The most common sources of sodium in drinking water are from natural environmental occurrences, road salt, water treatment chemicals and ion-exchange water softening units.

The human body needs sodium in order to maintain blood pressure, control fluid levels and for normal nerve and muscle function.

Sodium is found in most foods, soft water, some mineral waters and drugs such as antacids, laxatives, aspirin, and cough medicines.

Sodium in drinking water is not a health concern for most people but may be an issue for someone with severe hypertension, congestive heart failure or on a sodium-restricted diet.

THE GUIDELINES FOR THE ONTARIO DRINKING WATER STANDARDS AND THE ONTARIO SMALL DRINKING WATER SYSTEMS REGULATION 319/08

All natural waters contain some sodium. However, most people consume more sodium than they need. The Ontario Drinking Water Standards and the Ontario Small Drinking Water Systems Regulation 319/08 under the Health Protection and Promotion Act require reporting to the local Medical Officer of Health when sodium levels in public drinking water supplies exceed 20 mg/L. At this concentration point, the local Medical Officer of Health may order operators to inform consumers and local physicians, as such information will help persons on sodium-restricted diets control their sodium intake.

SODIUM-RESTRICTED DIETS

If the sodium concentration in your drinking water is 20 mg/L drinking up to two litres of water per day will add 40 mg of sodium to your diet. This is about 2% of a teaspoon of salt. 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 allotment of sodium.

REMEMBER...

If you are on a strict sodium-restricted diet, or experiencing severe hypertension, congestive heart failure you should consult your family physician about the concentration of salt in your drinking water. 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.

For more information on sodium in drinking water talk to a Public Health Inspector at the Brant County Health Unit, Environmental Health at 519-753-4937 Ext. 470.

Information Sources: Dietary Reference Intakes for Water, Potassium, Sodium, Chloride, and Sulfate, The National Academies, 2004. Canadian Nutrient File, Health Canada, 2005. Health Canada, Canadian Water Quality Association, U.S.E.P.A.