

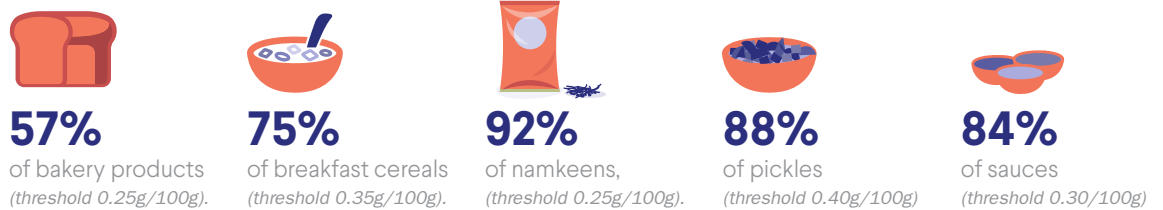


# Sodium Content in Processed Foods in India

Excess salt (sodium) intake is a major cause of high blood pressure, which affects one out of four adults in India and is responsible for nearly 16.5% of all deaths.<sup>1</sup> The average daily salt intake by Indians (about 11 g/day) is more than twice the amount recommended by the World Health Organization (5g/day).<sup>2</sup> Indians are increasingly consuming commercially-prepared foods (both packaged and unpackaged), which are also usually high in sodium. Processed food has grown in popularity in India in recent years: between 2011 and 2016, the growth of the food processing sector was nearly twice that of the agricultural sector.<sup>3</sup>

An analysis of the sodium content of some common processed foods in India revealed that most foods (sampled between 2016 and 2018) exceeded the thresholds for sodium provided by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI),<sup>4</sup> (Table 1)

## Food Products Exceeding FSSAI Sodium Thresholds



Evidence from other countries suggests that front-of-pack warning labels showing sodium levels can help reduce sodium consumption by providing easy to understand information to consumers and encouraging manufacturers to reformulate products.

Warning labels are an important step in reducing sodium intake, but they must be supported by other strategies, including:

- **Public education campaigns** to help consumers understand the risks of a high sodium diet and ways to reduce sodium intake.
- **Robust compliance monitoring** of the food industry, including informal food sector. Targeting foods high in sodium could be a first step.
- **Rigorous evaluation** of the effectiveness of warning labels, to identify opportunities for further interventions to achieve sodium reduction in packaged foods.

**TABLE 1**  
Sodium content of food products (2016-2018)

Food Category	Bakery	Breakfast cereals	Butter	Cheese	Meat	Namkeens	Pickles	Sauces	Soups	Combination meals	Flavoring agents	Spice mixes	Fryums
Sample Size	132	13	2	3	95	142	8	88	1	12	10	23	6
Mean Sodium (g/100g of food*)	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>1.54</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>1.02</b>	<b>5.22</b>	1.19	2.20	7.18	1.98
FSSAI Thresholds (g/100g)	0.25	0.35	0.10	0.60	0.40	0.25	0.40	0.30	0.35	NA	NA	NA	NA
Foods Exceeding FSSAI Thresholds (%)	56.8	75.0	50.0	100.0	87.4	91.6	87.5	84.1	100.0	NA	NA	NA	NA

\* Highlighted values exceeds FSSAI sodium thresholds

1 Gupta R. et al Emerging trends in hypertension epidemiology in India. *J Hum Hypertens.* 2018 Sep 25.

2 Johnson C et al. Mean Dietary Salt Intake in Urban and Rural Areas in India: A Population Survey of 1395 Individuals. *Journal of the American Heart Association.* 2017;6: e004547

3 Annual Report (2018). Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India. Available at [http://www.mofpi.nic.in/sites/default/files/annual\\_report\\_2017-2018.pdf](http://www.mofpi.nic.in/sites/default/files/annual_report_2017-2018.pdf) accessed on 20th June, 2019.

4 Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019 (Draft version notified on 1st July 2019)