

9.2: Introduction to Salt

Historically, salt was a prestigious commodity. “The salt of the earth” describes an outstanding person. The word salary comes from the Latin *salaria*, which was the payment made to Roman soldiers for the purchase of salt. In Arabic, the phrase translated as “there is salt between us” expresses the covenant between humans and the divine. Though no longer a valuable commodity in the monetary sense, salt is still valuable in the sense of being crucial to human health. Common salt (sodium chloride) is 40% sodium and 60% chloride. An average adult consumes about 7 kg (15 lb.) per year.

Salt can be found deposited in Earth’s layers in rock salt deposits. These deposits formed when the water in the oceans that covered Earth many millions of years ago evaporated. The salt was then covered by various types of rocks. Today, we have three basic methods of obtaining salt from natural sources:

- Mining rock salt
- Extracting salt from salt brines created by pumping water into underground salt deposits
- Evaporating salt water from oceans, seas, and salt lakes

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