

How to Reduce Sodium in Your Diet

Even if you never pick up the salt shaker, you might be getting more sodium than you need. That's because more than 70% of the sodium we eat comes from prepared, packaged and restaurant foods. These foods can make it hard to control how much sodium you eat.

Most people should cut back on sodium to improve their health.

When shopping for food:

- **Choose packaged and prepared foods carefully.** Compare labels and choose the product with the lowest amount of sodium per serving you can find. Different brands of the same food can have lower or higher sodium levels.
- **Pick fresh and frozen poultry that hasn't been injected with a sodium solution.** Check the fine print on the packaging for terms like "broth," "saline" or "sodium solution." Sodium levels in unseasoned fresh meats are around 100 milligrams or less per 4-ounce serving. Compare this with the same serving of prepared rotisserie chicken pre-seasoned with sodium, which can have 400 mg of sodium a serving!
- **Select condiments with care.** For example, soy sauce, bottled salad dressings, dips, ketchup, jarred salsas, capers, mustard, pickles, olives and relish can be loaded with sodium. Look for reduced-sodium or lower-sodium versions.
- **Buy canned vegetables labeled "no salt added" and frozen vegetables without salty sauces.** When canned and frozen veggies are added to casseroles, soups or other mixed dishes you won't miss the salt.
- **Look for foods labeled with the American Heart Association's Heart-Check mark.** The Heart-Check mark designates foods that can be part of an overall healthy dietary pattern. While it doesn't necessarily mean a product is "low sodium," it does mean that the food meets the AHA's sodium criteria to earn the Heart-Check mark.

You can eat foods with varying amounts of sodium and still achieve a balanced and heart-healthy diet. Learn more about the [Heart-Check Food Certification Program](#).

When preparing food:

- **Use flavorful ingredients.** Onions, garlic, herbs, spices, citrus juices and vinegars can add flavor in place of some, or all, of the salt. Our [recipes](#) and tips can help!
- **Drain and rinse canned beans and vegetables.** This can help cut the sodium by up to 40%.
- **Combine lower-sodium versions of food with regular versions.** If you don't like the taste of lower sodium foods right now, try combining them in equal parts with a regular version of the same food. You'll get less salt and probably won't notice much difference in taste. This works especially well for broths, soups and tomato-based pasta sauces.
- **Cook pasta, rice and hot cereal without salt.** You'll probably add other flavorful ingredients, so you won't miss the salt.
- **Grill, braise, roast, sear or sauté.** These cooking methods can bring out natural flavors and reduce the need to add salt.
- **Enjoy high-potassium foods regularly.** These include sweet potatoes, potatoes, greens, tomatoes and lower-sodium tomato sauce, white beans, kidney beans, nonfat yogurt, oranges, bananas and cantaloupe. Potassium helps counter the effects of sodium and may help lower your blood pressure.

At restaurants:

- **Tell them how you like it.** Ask for your dish to be made without extra salt and for sauces, dressings and gravies to be served on the side to use sparingly.
- **Taste your food before adding salt.** If you think it needs a boost of flavor, add freshly ground black pepper or a squeeze of fresh lemon or lime and taste it again before adding salt. Lemon and pepper are especially good on fish, chicken and vegetables.
- **Watch out for these food words:** *pickled, brined, barbecued, cured, smoked, broth, au jus, soy sauce, miso or teriyaki sauce.* These tend to be high in sodium. Foods that are steamed, baked, grilled, poached or roasted may have less sodium.
- **Control portion sizes.** When you cut calories, you usually cut the sodium, too. Ask if smaller portions are available, share the meal with a friend or ask for a to-go box when you order and place half the meal in the box to eat later.

Ask about the sodium content of menu items. Chain restaurants with 20 or more locations must provide nutrition information, including sodium content, to customers upon request.

Does less salt mean bland taste?

When you use less salt, you can taste the food's natural flavor, especially when you use cooking techniques and flavorful ingredients (see tips above) to enhance it.

Over time, your taste buds can adjust to less salt. Studies show that when people follow a lower-sodium diet, they start to prefer it, and that the foods they once enjoyed taste too salty. Try it and see for yourself!

What about salt substitutes?

There are several salt substitutes on the market that replace some or all of the sodium with potassium. Potassium salt tastes similar to sodium chloride, except when heated it can have a bitter aftertaste. Most people can try potassium salt, but certain medical conditions (like kidney disease) and medications can have implications on your body's potassium level. Talk with your health care professional about whether a salt substitute is right for you.



Healthy for Good

LOW SODIUM DIET FOODS LIST

Low sodium foods are abundant and many are natural, organic, and can be easily found. They can be found in every food group and there are many different possibilities for a low sodium meal.

BREADS, CEREALS, RICE AND PASTA

Most rice and pastas are very low in sodium. Compare labels to find products with less salt and don't add salt when cooking. The following are also all viable low-sodium food items:

- Whole grain bread
- Granola
- Puffed rice
- Rolled oats
- Shredded wheats
- Unsalted popcorn
- Bread, bagels, English muffins, crackers, or bread sticks without salted tops

FRUITS

Any kind of fruit or fruit juice (fresh, frozen, or canned) is low in sodium if it does not contain sauces. Fruits particularly low in sodium include:

- Apples
- Bananas
- Blackberries
- Cherries
- Peaches
- Pears
- Raspberries
- Watermelons

VEGETABLES

As with fruits, all fresh vegetables are low in sodium. Vegetables may also be frozen or canned if, like fruits, they do not contain sauces.

- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Chickpeas
- Cucumber
- Green peppers
- Lima beans
- Sweet potatoes

PROTEIN

Choose fresh meats when possible. Some fresh meat has added sodium, so always check the label.

- 6 ounces daily of any fresh or frozen beef, veal, lamb, pork, poultry, and fish without salt or sodium in the preparation and without skin.
- Low sodium, water packed tuna or salmon
- Eggs and egg substitutes
- Unsalted nuts and seeds
- Low sodium nut butter



FATS

- Olive oil and other cooking oils
- Low sodium mayonnaise
- Unsalted butter or margarine
- Low sodium salad dressings

DAIRY

Milk is a healthy dairy product that contains virtually no sodium. Choose fat free or low-fat milk and yogurt more often than cheese, which can be high in sodium. Milk and yogurt are also good sources of potassium, which can help lower blood pressure.

- Low sodium cottage cheese
- Fat free or low fat yogurt
- Skim or 1% milk
- Soy-based drinks with added calcium
- Cream
- Non-dairy creamers
- Sour cream
- Ice cream

CONDIMENTS AND EXTRAS

Choose condiments that are low in sodium or have no sodium at all, and try seasonings instead of salt to flavor food.

- Spices and herbs without sodium or salt
- Vinegar
- Lemon
- Fresh horseradish or prepared without salt
- Baking soda and powder
- Cream of tartar
- Mustard
- Tabasco sauce or low sodium chili sauces
- Mrs. Dash and other sodium-free seasonings
- Yeast
- Jams and jellies
- Low sodium ketchup
- Low sodium tomato sauces and vegetable juices without salt or sodium added

HIGH SODIUM FOODS TO AVOID

- Buttermilk, malted milk, chocolate milk
- Bacon (all types), sausages or hot dogs, all lunch meats unless low sodium
- Breaded meats (such as chicken parmesan)
- Meats koshered by salting
- Canned or frozen vegetables if processed with salt
- Anchovies and other smoked fish; caviar
- Anything pickled (such as sauerkraut, pickles); olives



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EAT LESS SODIUM: QUICK TIPS

1. Know your sodium limit

- Healthy adults need to limit their sodium intake to no more than 2,300 mg per day (about 1 teaspoon of salt)
- Some people, including children and those with high blood pressure, need to keep their sodium intake even lower (no more than 1,500 mg per day). Ask your doctor how much sodium is okay for you.
- If you need to make changes, slowly reduce the amount of sodium in your foods and your taste for salt will change with time.

2. Check the label

- Use the Nutrition Facts Label to check the sodium in packaged foods. Try to choose products with 5% Daily Value (DV) or less. A sodium content of 20% DV or more is high.
- Look for foods labeled "low sodium," "reduced sodium," or "no salt added."

3. Shop for low sodium foods

- Load up on vegetables, fruits, beans, and peas, which are naturally low in sodium. Fresh, frozen, and dried options are all good choices.
- When you buy canned fruit, look for options packed in 100% juice or water.
- When you buy canned vegetables and beans, choose ones with labels that say "low sodium," "reduced sodium," or "no salt added."
- Compare the sodium in foods like bread, soup, and frozen meals. Choose the ones with less sodium.
- Limit processed foods, especially foods that are salted, smoked, or cured, like hot dogs, bacon, and deli meats.

4. Prepare your meals with less sodium

- If you buy canned foods (like vegetables, beans, or fish), choose low sodium varieties.
- If you use canned foods that aren't low sodium, rinse them before eating to wash away some of the salt.
- Use unsalted butter or soft margarine.
- Don't add salt to the water when you cook pasta or rice.
- Try different herbs and spices to flavor your food instead of salt.

5. Add more potassium to your diet

- Adding more potassium can help lower your blood pressure. Good sources of potassium include potatoes, cantaloupe, bananas, beans, and yogurt.

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Dietary Salt (sodium) Intake

Physicians may initially suggest a partially reduced salt level, in the range of 1000 - 2000 mg/day, to see if symptoms can be alleviated. Maintaining a sodium intake below 2000 mg/day requires considerable effort. Eating in restaurants causes difficulty as the majority of restaurant food is salted. To maintain a low sodium diet, you need to scrutinize the "Nutritional Information" boxes on food cartons. The amount of salt is listed as "sodium". Choose those products which would give you the least sodium, based on the amount of product you eat. Note that many "high salt" products (ketchup, salad dressing, corn chips) show relatively low sodium values based on very small serving portions (who eats only 12 corn chips at a sitting??). What is important is the total amount of sodium you are eating each day. As shown in the list below, fresh fruits and vegetables have low sodium content, but avoid adding salt to vegetables during preparation. The following advice may help maintain a low salt intake.

- Do not use salt at the table
- Reduce the salt used in food preparation. Try 1/2 teaspoon when recipes call for 1 teaspoon. Many cakes and desserts can be prepared without adding salt.
- Use herbs and spices for flavoring meats and vegetables instead of salt.
- Avoid salty foods such as processed meat and fish, pickles, soy sauce, salted nuts, chips and other snack foods.
- Check every "Nutritional Information" label before you buy or use a product. Note sodium and portion size information.

Sodium Content of Common Foods

All values are given in mg of sodium for a 100 g (3.5 oz) food portion. These values are a guide. More accurate values are given in the Nutritional Information on the package of most products, in the form of mg of sodium per serving.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple, raw unpeeled 1 • Apple juice, bottled 1 • Applesauce, sweetened 2 • Asparagus, cooked 1 (regular canned 236) • Avocado 4 • Bacon, cooked 1021 • Bacon, canadian 2500 • Baking powder 11,000 • Banana 1 • Barly, pearled 3 • Beans, Lima 1 (regular canned 236) • Beans, snap green, cooked 4 (regular canned 236) • Beans, white common, cooked 7 • Beans, canned with pork and tomato sauce 463 • Bean sprouts, cooked 4 • Beef, roasted broiled or stewed 60 • Beef, corned 1,740 • Beef hash, canned 540 • Beef, dried 4,300 • beef hamburger 47 • Beef pie or stew, commercial 400 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chili canned with beans 531 • Chili powder w/ seasonings 1574 • Chocolate, plain 4 • Chocolate syrup 52 • Clams, raw soft 36 • Clams, hard, round 205 • Cocoa, dry 6 • Cocoa, processed 717 • Coconut, fresh 23 • Coffee, instant, dry 72 • Coffee, beverage, 1 • Collards, cooked 25 • Cookies, Fig bars 252 • Cookies, oatmeal 170 • Cookies, plain 365 • Corn, sweet, canned 236 • Cowpeas, dry, cooked 8 • Crabmeat, canned 1000 • Crackers, Graham 670 • Crackers, saltines 1,100 • Cranberry juice or sauce 1 • Cream 40 • Cucumber 6 • Dates 1 • Doughnuts 500 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickles, relish, sweet 712 • Pie 250 to 450 • Pie crust, baked 617 • Pike, walleye 51 • Pineapple, raw or canned 1 • Pizza, cheese 702 • Plums 2 • Popcorn, salted with oil 1,940 • Pork 65 • Pork, cured ham 930 • Pork canned ham 1,100 • Potatoes, baked, boiled or french fried 2 to 6 • Potatoes, mashed salted 331 • Potato chips, up to 1000 • Okra, 2 • Olives, green 2,400 • Onions, green 5 (mature 10) • Orange peeled, juice, canned or juice 1 • Oysters, raw 73 • Pancakes 425 • Papayas, raw 3 • Parsley 45 • Parsnips, cooked 8
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- Fats, cooked 43 (regular canned 236)
- Beverages, beer 7
- Beverages, liquor 1 (avoid margaritas with salt!)
- Beverages, wine 5
- Beverage, soda 0 to 100 (check can)
- Beverage, fruit drink 0
- Beverage, water 0
- Biscuits 630
- Blackberries 1
- Bluefish, cooked 104
- Bouillon cubes 24,000
- Bread 300 to 500
- Broccoli, cooked 10
- Brussel sprouts, cooked 10
- Butter, salted 826
(unsalted - less than 10)
- Cabbage 20
- Cakes 100 to 300
- Candy, caramels, fudge 200
- Candy, hard, marshmallow, peanut brittle 30
- Cantaloupe 12
- Carrots 40 (regular canned 236)
- Cashews, unsalted 15
- Cauliflower 10
- Celery, raw 126 (cooked 88)
- Cereals bran, wheat, crude 9
- Cereals, commercial 700 to 1100
- Cereal, Corn grits 1
- Cereal, Cornmeal 1
- Cereal, Farina, dry 2 (cooked salted or instant 160)
- Cereal, Oatmeal, dry 2 (cooked salted 218)
- Cereal, Rice flakes 987
- Cereal, wheat flakes 1000
- Cereal, wheat, puffed 4
- Cereal, wheat, shredded 3
- Cheese, cheddar 620
- Cheese, processed 1189
- Cheese, cottage 406
- Cheese, cream 296
- Cheese, Mozzarella 373
- Cheese, Parmesan 1,862
- Cheese, Swiss 260
- Cherries, Raw 2
- Chicken, cooked, no skin 60 to 80
- Chicken pot pie, commercial 411
- Chickpeas, dry 8
- Chicory 7

- Duck 74
- Eggplant, cooked 1
- Egg, whole, raw 74 (whites 152, yolk 49)
- Endive, curly 14
- Figs 2
- Flounder 78
- Flour 2
- Fruit cocktail 5
- Gelatin, dry 0 (sweetened, ready-to eat 51)
- Grapefruit, fresh, canned/juice 1
- Grapes 3
- Haddock, raw 61 (battered 177)
- Heart, beef 86
- Herring 74
- Honey 5
- Honeydew melon 12
- Ice cream, vanilla 87
- Jams and preserves 12
- Jellies 17
- Kale, cooked 43
- Lamb, lean 70
- Lard 0
- Lasagna 490
- Lemon, juice or fresh 1
- Lettuce 9
- Lime, fresh or juice 1
- Liver, beef 184
- Liver, pork 111
- Lobster 210
- Macaroni, dry 2 (commercial with cheese 543)
- Margarine 987
- Milk 50
- Milk, buttermilk 130
- Milk, evaporated 106
- Milk, dried 549
- Molasses, light 15 (Dark 96)
- Muffins, plain 441
- Mushrooms 14 (canned 400)
- Mustard, prepared yellow 1,252
- Mustard greens 18
- Nectarine 6
- Noodles, dry 5
- Nuts, in shell 1 (processed nuts may contain high amounts of salt)
- Oil, corn 0
- Pecans, shelled 0
- Peppers, green 13
- Perch 79
- Pickles, dill 1428

- Peaches 2
- Peanuts, roasted 5 (salted 418)
- Peanut butter 607
- Pears 2
- Peas, cooked 2 (regular canned 236)
- Peas, dried 40
- Pretzels 1680
- Prunes 4
- Pumpkin, canned 2
- Radishes 18
- Raisins, dried 27
- Raspberries 1
- Rhubarb 2
- Rice, dry 5 (cooked salted 374)
- Rolls, bread or sweet 400 to 550
- Rutabagas 4
- Rye wafers 882
- Salad dressing 700 to 1300
- Salmon 64 (canned 387)
- Sardines, canned 400
- Sauerkraut 747
- Sausage, pork 958
- Sausage, Frankfurter 1,100
- Sausage, Bologna 1,300
- Scallops, 265
- Shrimp 150
- Soup, canned 350 to 450
- Spaghetti, dry 2
- Spaghetti meatballs, canned 488
- Spinach, raw 71 (cooked 50)
- Squash 1
- Strawberries 1
- Sugar, white 1 (brown 30)
- Sunflower seeds 30
- Sweetpotatoes 12
- Syrup 68
- Tapioca, dry 3
- Tomato 3 (canned 130)
- Tomato ketchup 1,042
- Tomato juice, canned 200
- Tongue, beef 61
- Tuna in oil 800
- Turkey, 82
- Turnips 34
- Veal 80
- Vinegar 1
- Waffles 475
- Walnuts 3
- Watermelon 1
- Wheat germ 827
- Yeast, 16 (dry, active 52)
- Yoghurt 46