

Low Sodium Diet

Sodium is another word for salt. Too much salt in your diet can make your body hold on to too much fluid. This fluid can collect where it shouldn't, like in your hands, legs, ankles, belly, and lungs. This may cause problems if you have liver, heart, or kidney disease.

Sodium comes from the salt shaker, but also in many foods you might not realize – even when you don't add extra salt. If your doctor tells you to reduce the salt in your diet, use this handout to guide your food choices.

How Much Sodium is Too Much?

- Aim for a daily intake of 2000 milligrams (mg) or less.
- Keep in mind that one teaspoon of table salt contains 2,300 mg of sodium.
- Table salt, sea salt, and kosher salt all contain sodium. All should be used in small amounts.
- Read labels for sodium content. Here are some tips:
 - Choose side dishes or snacks with 140 mg or less sodium per serving.
 - Each meal should have 600 mg sodium or less.

Low Salt Eating Tips

Using less salt in cooking and at the table will help, but you will also need to limit foods that have high amounts of sodium.

Eat more:

- ✓ Fresh foods
- ✓ Meals made at home
- ✓ Fresh and dried herbs and spices, instead of salt. Use them for seasoning foods during cooking and at the table. Examples: oregano, basil, cumin, chili powder, thyme, rosemary, parsley, and many more!
- ✓ Foods cooked with onion, garlic, peppers, carrots, and other vegetables instead of salt. Use these to season rice, pasta, potatoes, and meat dishes.
- ✓ Frozen vegetables and canned vegetables with no salt added.

Eat less:

- ✓ Fast food and take-out (like Chinese food and pizza)
- ✓ Store bought canned foods, unless the label says “no salt added”

- ✓ Canned soups, unless they are Low Sodium varieties. See the section on reading labels below.
- ✓ Processed foods and salty snacks
- ✓ Ready-made meals like boxed rices and TV dinners
- ✓ Jarred condiments like salsa, pickles, and olives

Reading Nutrition Labels

Sodium is always on the food label. These steps will help you figure out how much sodium is in a certain food:

1. **Number of servings and mg of sodium** – The label gives you the serving size and the number of servings in the package. The Nutrition Facts apply to the serving size listed on the label, not necessarily to the whole package. *For example, if the serving size is 1 cup and you eat or drink 2 cups, you will get twice as much sodium.*

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	1 cup (227g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

2. **Look at the ingredients** – Beware of products that list “salt,” “sodium,” and “monosodium glutamate” as one of the first five ingredients.
3. **Compare brands** – The sodium content of a certain food may vary from brand to brand. Be sure you are comparing similar serving sizes.

Foods labeled as *reduced sodium* contain less salt than the regular variety and might be better choices. But, remember, reduced sodium foods are not sodium free. For example, a reduced sodium frozen meal may have 600 mg sodium instead of 800 mg sodium in the regular version.

There are laws that regulate what certain words and phrases mean on the front of food labels. The table below explains what food companies are allowed to say. Remember to check the Nutrition Facts label to make sure you are eating the correct serving size to stay within these limits.

What the Label Says	What that Means
Sodium-Free	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
Very Low Sodium	35 mg or less of sodium per serving
Low Sodium	140 mg or less of sodium per serving
Reduced or less sodium	At least 25% less sodium than a serving size of the original product
Unsalted, no salt added, without added salt	May contain sodium as a natural part of the food, but no additional sodium or salt is added during processing

What to Eat: The Specifics

Food Group:	Choose these lower sodium foods:	Limit these high sodium foods:
Breads, Grains, and Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loaf bread, dinner rolls, English muffins, bagels (limit to 2-3 servings daily) Plain pasta, noodles, plain rice White or sweet potatoes, unsalted Dried beans, peas, and lentils (<i>cook with onion and garlic for flavor</i>); Unsalted hot cereals like oatmeal and wheat farina Unsalted or low sodium snack foods (read labels, some chips are low in salt) Low sodium ready to eat cereals such as puffed rice, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biscuits and biscuit mixes, such as Bisquick® Pancake, muffin, and cornbread mixes Seasoned rice and noodle mixes like ramen noodles, Noodle Roni®, Rice-a-Roni®, boxed macaroni and cheese Coating mixes like seasoned bread crumbs, Shake'n' Bake® Salted snacks like potato chips, nachos, peanut butter crackers, pretzels, pork rinds) Instant mashed potatoes

	cornflakes, oat Os, shredded wheat	
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh or frozen vegetables • “No salt added” canned vegetables (<i>Draining + rinsing regular canned vegetables will help remove some sodium, but fresh or frozen are the best choices</i>), • Low sodium vegetable juices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular canned vegetables • Canned vegetable juices (example: V8®, tomato) • Pickles, olives, relish • Vegetables in a cream, butter or cheese sauce • Vegetables cooked with bacon, fatback, or salt
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All fruits and fruit juices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need to limit any! (canned fruits do not contain sodium)

Food Group:	Choose these lower sodium foods:	Limit these high sodium foods:
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • Yogurt • Cream cheese, especially whipped • Sour cream • Ice cream and frozen yogurt • Whipped cream • Low sodium cheeses*: Swiss, mozzarella, grated Parmesan <p><i>*Note: read labels, cheese varies in sodium content.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buttermilk • Processed cheeses: American, Nacho cheese, Cheez Whiz®, Easy Cheese® • Blue cheese • Pimento cheese • Cottage cheese • Queso fresco • Feta cheese <p><i>Note: Low Fat does not mean low sodium!</i></p>
Meats and Meat Substitutes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh or frozen un-breaded meats (chicken, turkey, fish, beef, lamb, pork, veal) • Eggs prepared without salt • Regular peanut butter (low sodium is best) • Unsalted nuts, soy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processed luncheon meats (Bologna, Salami, Pastrami, Ham, Turkey, Corned beef) • Ham, sausage, bacon, hotdogs • Breaded or battered meats (Chicken nuggets & fish sticks). • Salted, cured or smoked meats, • Canned meats (Spam® & potted meat - unless labeled low sodium)

Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsalted butter, Lard • Olive or vegetable oil • Tub or squeeze margarine • Low sodium or homemade salad dressings • Mayonnaise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bacon and bacon grease • Salt pork • Fat back • Regular commercial salad dressings
Seasonings and condiments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh or dried herbs and spices • Vinegar, lemon juice and fruit juices for marinades • Onion and garlic (fresh, minced, dried in flakes or powdered) • Pepper, celery seed, and dried vegetable flakes • Mustard, low sodium bouillon • Spice and herb blends without added salt (Mrs. Dash®) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt, sea salt, lite salt, bouillon cubes • Potassium-containing salt substitutes (Nu-Salt®, No Salt®) • Seasoning salts (garlic salt, onion salt, celery salt) • Spice and herb mixes with added salt, including Old Bay® • Commercially prepared sauces (teriyaki, soy) • Large amounts of ketchup or BBQ sauce

Some Foods Should Always Be Avoided

Some foods are extremely high in sodium. You should avoid these foods in your diet as much as possible. There are reduced sodium versions of some these products, but these may still be high in sodium - check the labels!

Processed deli meats	Salt pork
Sausage	Fat back
Bacon	Regular salad dressings
Hot dogs	Salt
Canned meats	Bouillon
Smoked or cured meats (pepperoni, salami, etc.)	Seasoning salts
Breaded meats, fish, poultry	Soy sauce
Processed cheese products (Cheez Wiz®, Velveeta®, etc.)	Worcestershire sauce
Pickles	Regular canned soups

Canned vegetables and vegetable juices that are not “reduced sodium” or “no salt added”	Dry soup mixes
Olives	Frozen meals
Biscuits	Fast food
Salted snack foods (pretzels, etc.)	Canned tomato products, spaghetti sauce, tomato, or V-8® juice
Seasoned rice (Rice-A-Roni®, etc.)	Noodle or potato mixes