



# Low Sodium Diet Tips

Sodium is a mineral found in table salt and sea salt. It is found in some foods naturally, but mostly in the additives, preservatives, and seasonings used in processed foods.

Too much sodium can be harmful for people with high blood pressure, kidney disease or heart failure. A low sodium diet limits salt to 1,500-2,000 milligrams (mg) per day. This is possible if you choose foods with 140 mg sodium or less per serving and avoid food with more than 300 mg of sodium per serving.

## Salt and Sodium Savers

- **Cut back on sodium**

When cooking, use salt-free options such as Mrs. Dash®, citrus fruits, vinegar, black pepper, herbs, or spices to add flavor to foods. Avoid seasoning salt, onion salt, and garlic salt. Choose onion or garlic powder and sodium-free herb blend seasonings. Remember condiments, such as ketchup, pickles, olives, soy sauce, hot sauce, and teriyaki sauce are **high** in sodium.



- **Choose fresh, avoid processed foods**

Over 75% of sodium comes from processed and restaurant foods. Only 11% comes from salt added to food when cooking or eating. Control sodium intake by selecting fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables without added juices or sauces. Choose unsalted or low-sodium versions of chips, crackers, pretzels, or nuts. When eating out, ask for food to be prepared without added salt. Ask for dressings or condiments “on the side” so you can control the amount you eat.



---

- **Read food labels**

Food labels will show you how much sodium is in the food you eat. Notice the serving size and servings per container. Use the Nutrition Facts Label to check sodium content – the Percent Daily Value (%DV) tells you how much sodium is in one serving of food.

As a general rule, 5% DV or less of sodium per serving is low while DV of 20% or more of sodium per serving is high. Use food labels to compare items so that you choose the lower sodium product.



- **Shop smart**

Look for “reduced-sodium” or “no-added salt” on the food label. Choose lower sodium versions of canned soup, vegetables, and tomato sauce. Look for food packages that say “**salt-free**” or “**sodium-free**” – these items contain less than 5mg of sodium per serving. “**Low-sodium**” products contain less than 140 mg of sodium per serving while “**very low-sodium**” contain less than 35 mg of sodium per serving. Drain and rinse canned foods in a strainer to remove excess sodium.

- **Ask your doctor before using a salt-substitute**

Salt substitutes that look and taste like salt usually contain potassium. Too much potassium can cause serious problems for people who have certain medical conditions. Some medications can require a low potassium intake.

- **Meats and cheese vary in sodium content**

Eat fresh meats, chicken, and fish instead of canned or processed items. Limit intake of lunch meats or cured and smoked meats such as ham, bacon, brats, or sausage. Cheese is high in sodium, and processed cheeses tend to be the highest in sodium.