



SALT/SODIUM IN THE DIET

In some people, sodium increases blood pressure because it holds excess fluid in the body, placing an added burden on the heart. If your blood pressure is 120/80 mm Hg or above, your doctor may recommend a low-salt diet or advise you to avoid salt altogether.

The American Heart Association recommends consuming less than 1500 mg of sodium a day.

Salt vs. Sodium Equivalents

Sodium chloride or table salt is approximately 40% sodium. Understand just how much sodium is in salt so you can take measures to control your intake. These amounts are approximate.

1/4 teaspoon salt = 575 mg sodium
1/2 teaspoon salt = 1,150 mg sodium
3/4 teaspoon salt = 1,725 mg sodium
1 teaspoon salt = 2,300 mg sodium

Take the [Sodium Quiz](#) to see how much you know about how your sodium intake can impact your health.

Shopping and Cooking

Shop smart, cook smart

- **Avoid processed, prepared and pre-packaged foods.**
Americans consume up to 75 percent of their sodium from these food sources. Examples include soups, tomato sauce, condiments, canned goods, preserved meats and prepared mixes.
- **Choose lower-sodium foods or low-sodium versions of your favorites.**
Although it may take some time for your taste buds to adjust to a lower sodium diet, there are delicious options for very flavorful, low-sodium meals. Once the adjustment to healthier dining is made, many people report they would not choose to go back to the highly processed sodium rich foods.
- **[Read your food labels.](#)**
When buying pre-packaged foods, read the labels. Many different sodium compounds are added to foods, and they are listed on food labels. Watch for the words "soda" and "sodium" and the symbol "Na" on labels, which warn you that these products contain sodium

compounds. Many canned and frozen food labels help the consumer by printing "low salt" or "low sodium" boldly on the packaging.

- **[Eat more fruits and vegetables.](#)**
When buying canned or frozen varieties, be sure to choose the no-salt added versions, and look for the choices without added sauces.
- **Use fruit and raw vegetables as snacks.**
These are a heart-healthy alternative to chips and salted nuts.
- **Select unsalted nuts or seeds, dried beans, peas and lentils.**
- **Select unsalted or low-sodium fat-free broths, bouillons or soups.**
- **Avoid adding salt and canned vegetables with added salt to homemade dishes.**
- **Don't use salt during cooking.**
Certain salt substitutes contain a large amount of potassium and very little sodium. They are not expensive and may be used freely by most people, except those with kidney disease. Talk with your healthcare professional about whether a salt substitute is right for you.
- **Learn to use spices and herbs to enhance the natural flavor of food.**
Ditch salt for healthier, delicious salt-free seasoning alternatives.
- **Don't salt food before you taste it; enjoy the natural taste of food.**
- **Take the salt shaker off the table.**
Adding more salt at the table adds to your daily sodium intake without adding much to the flavor of your food.
- **Eat less salted potato and corn chips, lunchmeat, hot dogs, salt pork, ham hocks, dill pickles and many canned foods.**
All of these foods have a lot of salt.

Follow the [D.A.S.H. eating plan](#).

Reduce Sodium When Dining Out

- Be familiar with low-sodium foods and look for them on the menu.
- When ordering, be specific about what you want and how you want it prepared. Request that your dish be prepared without salt.
- Don't use the salt shaker. Instead, use the pepper shaker or mill.
- Add fresh lemon juice instead of salt to season fish and vegetables.