



Shake the Sodium Habit

What Is Sodium?

Sodium is an essential mineral needed for the regulation of body fluids, muscle contractions, nerve cells, and cell membranes.

High Blood Pressure

Considerable debate still exists regarding sodium intake and high blood pressure (hypertension). However, on average, the higher a person's salt intake, the higher the blood pressure. Current research indicates that excess sodium intake may lead to high blood pressure in "sodium sensitive" individuals.

It is believed that when sodium sensitive individuals with high blood pressure consume salty foods their blood volume increases, which places tension on the artery walls and causes the heart to work harder to pump the extra fluid. The risk factors associated with sodium sensitivity include a genetic predisposition, age, race, and obesity.

Treatment for high blood pressure includes weight loss, a low sodium diet, limited alcohol consumption, and daily physical activity. Increased intake of fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, and low

fat milk products (rich sources of potassium, calcium, and magnesium) have also been associated with lower blood pressure.

Should I Decrease My Sodium Intake?

The Estimated Minimum Requirement for sodium is 500 mgs. per day for individuals age 10 and over. However, the average American consumes an incredible 6 to 12 times that amount!

Federal dietary guidelines recommend limiting sodium intake to less than 2,300mg/day. One teaspoon of salt (sodium chloride) alone provides about this much. Many foods naturally contain sodium, and this amount is more than sufficient to

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meet your physiological needs. Even though controversy still exists regarding sodium and high blood pressure, it is wise to avoid excess sodium.

Why Do Manufacturers Add Salt to Food?

Salt is a food preservative used to cure meat and fish, brine pickles, leaven bread, and ferment cheese. In addition, salt is added to food to satisfy the taste buds of the American public. Many food manufacturers know we are accustomed to the taste of excess salt and add it so that their products will be appealing to the average consumer.

Tips to Decrease Your Sodium Intake

- Taste your food before adding salt.
- Consume high sodium condiments in moderation. Examples include pickles, relish, soy sauce, steak sauce, and sauerkraut.
- Use herbs, spices, fresh garlic, and lemon juice rather than salt to flavor foods.
- Substitute fruits, unsalted nuts and popcorn, and other low sodium snacks for high-salt items, such as potato chips.

- Be aware that processed foods, frozen dinners, and entrees with gravies and sauces can be especially high in sodium.
- Limit your intake of cheese and canned foods.
- Reduce your intake of hot dogs and luncheon meats like bologna, ham, salami, corned beef, and pastrami.
- Select salad dressings carefully as many are high in sodium.
- Limit breakfast meats such as bacon and sausage.
- Be aware that instant, ready to eat, and fast foods are generally high in sodium.
- Select non-prescription antacids that are low in sodium.
- Read ingredient labels for sodium content.

As the amount of salt in your diet is reduced, your tastebuds will gradually adapt and the preference for salty foods will decrease, allowing the natural flavor of many fresh foods to become evident.

Please visit www.snac.ucla.edu to learn about the sodium content of various foods.



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SUGGESTIONS TO DECREASE YOUR SODIUM INTAKE

- Taste your food before adding salt.
- Use herbs, spices, fresh garlic, and lemon juice rather than salt to flavor food.
- Substitute fruits, unsalted nuts, and other low-sodium snacks for high-salt items, such as potato chips.
- Be aware that processed foods, frozen dinners, canned soups, and entrees with gravies and sauces can be especially high in sodium.
- Reduce your intake of bacon, sausage, hot dogs and luncheon meats such as corned beef, pastrami, bologna, ham, and salami.
- Be aware that instant, ready-to-eat, and fast foods are typically high in sodium.

Guide to Selecting Foods to Lower Your Sodium Intake

The following is a guide to assist you in selecting foods that can help you lower the amount of sodium you eat every day.

CHOOSE MORE OFTEN

CHOOSE LESS OFTEN

Food Group	Low in Sodium <i>(Less than 100 mg./svg.)</i>	Medium in Sodium <i>(100-400 mg./svg.)</i>	High in Sodium <i>(More than 400 mg./svg.)</i>
Spices, Sauces, and Condiments	Cinnamon, Garlic, Curry, Mint, Dill, Onion, Dry Mustard, Parsley, Oregano, Tabasco, Paprika, Vinegar, Tomato Paste	BBQ Sauce, Catsup, Chili Sauce, Gravies, Mayonnaise, Mustard, Tomato Puree, Tomato Sauce	Salt, Bouillon, Monosodium Glutamate, Salted Spices (garlic, onion, and seasoned salt), Salad Dressings, Soy Sauce, Teriyaki Sauce, Worcestershire Sauce
Grains*	Flour, Rice, Pasta, Noodles, Whole Grains, Matzoh, Unsalted Popcorn, Shredded Wheat, Hot Cereals (except packaged instant)	Breads and Rolls, Most Dry Cereals, Biscuits, Muffins, Pancakes, Waffles, Cakes, Pies, Cookies, Pastries, Doughnuts	Commercially-prepared Spaghetti, Instant Hot Cereals, Salted Pretzels, Salted Crackers, Salted Popcorn, Chips, and Other Snack Foods
Vegetables and Fruits	Fresh Fruits, Fruit Juices, Fresh Vegetables, Most Frozen Vegetables	Canned Vegetables, Frozen Lima Beans, Frozen Peas	All Pickled Vegetables, Olives, Sauerkraut, Vegetables with Sauce
Beverages	Carbonated Beverages, Coffee and Tea, Most Mineral Waters	Milk, Buttermilk	Tomato Juice, Vegetable Juice

* To boost fiber and nutrients, choose whole grain (vs. enriched) products and limit sweetened baked goods.





Food Group	CHOOSE MORE OFTEN		CHOOSE LESS OFTEN
	Low in Sodium <i>(Less than 100 mg./serving.)</i>	Medium in Sodium <i>(100-400 mg./serving.)</i>	High in Sodium <i>(More than 400 mg./serving.)</i>
Fish, Poultry, Meat, Eggs, Beans, and Nuts*	Eggs, Fresh Meat w/o added salt: (Pork, Beef, Veal, Lamb), Fresh Poultry and Fish, Boiled Beans, Tofu, Unsalted Nuts	Canned Tuna, Fresh Shellfish, Nuts, Peanut Butter	Bacon, Ham, Corned Beef, Luncheon Meats, Sausage, Canned Beans, Most Commercially-prepared Entrees, Packaged Soups

* To control fat, choose lean meats, skinless poultry, fish, and beans.

Dairy Products**	Cream Cheese, Cream, Ricotta Cheese, Sherbet, Swiss Cheese, Unsalted Butter or Margarine	Milk, Buttermilk, Salted Butter, Margarine, Custard, Ice Cream, Pudding	Blue Cheese, Cottage Cheese, Processed Cheese, American Cheese, Parmesan Cheese
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**To control fat, choose 1% low-fat or fat-free dairy products; limit butter, margarine, and cream.