

Reducing Sodium in Your Diet



What is sodium?

- Sodium is the main ingredient in table salt. It is also found in lots of foods, and even in water. The body needs a very small amount of sodium to work normally, but most people eat much more sodium than their body needs.

To decrease salt try the following:

- Put away the salt shaker and reduce or eliminate salt in cooking. Experiment with spices, garlic, onions, or lemon instead.
- Look for low-sodium products such as spice blends and read labels on canned, bottled, and frozen foods.
- Make a list of healthy low-sodium foods to substitute. Many grocery stores now supply this information.
- When dining out, request the food be prepared without salt, have dressings or sauces on the side, and avoid bacon bits, cheese, and croutons at the salad bar.
- Avoid eating at fast food restaurants.
- Do not use salt substitutes (especially those high in potassium) unless a healthcare provider approves.
- Water softeners remove calcium and add sodium to drinking water. Do not drink softened water. When purchasing bottled water, check the label to ensure that it does not contain sodium.
- Look at labels for over-the-counter medications. Avoid products that contain sodium carbonate or sodium bicarbonate. Sodium bicarbonate is baking soda.

Foods to choose:

- Breads – Whole grain breads, English muffins, bagels, corn and flour tortillas, most muffins
- Cereals – Many cooked low-salt (read the label to determine sodium content) hot cereals (not instant) such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, rice, or farina, puffed wheat, puffed rice, shredded wheat
- Crackers and snack foods – All unsalted crackers and snack foods, unsalted peanut butter, unsalted nuts or seeds, unsalted popcorn
- Pasta, rice, and potatoes – Any type of pasta (cooked in unsalted water), potatoes, white or brown rice
- Dried peas and beans – Any cooked dried beans or peas (without seasoning packet), or low-salt canned beans and peas
- Meats and protein – Fresh or frozen beef, poultry, and fish; low-sodium canned tuna and salmon; eggs or egg substitutes
- Fruits and vegetables – Any fresh, frozen, or canned fruit, any fresh or frozen vegetables without sauce, canned vegetables without salt, low-salt tomato sauce/paste
- Dairy products – Milk, cream, sour cream, non-dairy creamer, yogurt, lower-sodium cottage and other cheeses

- Fats and oils – Plant oils (olive, canola, corn, peanut), unsalted butter or margarine
- Soups – Salt-free soups and low-sodium bouillon cubes, unsalted broth, homemade soup without added salt
- Desserts – Gelatin, sherbet, pudding, ice cream, salt-free baked goods, sugar, honey, jam, jelly, marmalade, syrup
- Beverages – Coffee, tea, soft drinks, fruit-flavored drinks, low-salt tomato juice, any fruit juice
- Condiments – Fresh and dried herbs; lemon juice; low-salt mustard (not commercially available but can be made at home), vinegar, and Tabasco sauce; low- or no-salt ketchup; seasoning blends that do not contain salt

Foods to avoid:

- Breads – Biscuits, prepared mixes (pancake, muffin, cornbread), instant hot cereals, many boxed cold cereals, self-rising flour
- Crackers and snack foods – Salted crackers and snack items (chips, pretzels, popcorn), regular peanut butter, prepared dips/spreads, salted nuts or seeds
- Pasta, rice, and potatoes – Macaroni and cheese mix; rice, noodle, or spaghetti mixes; canned spaghetti; frozen lasagna; instant potatoes; seasoned potato mixes
- Beans and peas – Beans or peas prepared with ham, bacon, salt pork, or bacon grease; most canned beans
- Meats and proteins – Salted, smoked, canned, spiced, and cured meat, poultry, or fish; bacon; ham; sausage; lunch meats; hot dogs; breaded frozen meat, fish, or poultry; frozen dinners; pizza
- Fruits and vegetables – Regular canned vegetables and vegetable juices, regular tomato sauce and tomato paste, olives, pickles, relishes, sauerkraut, frozen vegetables in butter or sauces, crystallized and glazed fruit, maraschino cherries, fruit dried with sodium sulfite
- Dairy products – Buttermilk, Dutch-processed chocolate milk, processed cheese slices and spreads, most cottage cheese, aged or natural cheeses
- Fats and oils – Prepared salad dressings, bacon, salt pork, fat back, salted butter or margarine
- Soups – Regular canned or prepared soups, stews, broths, or bouillon; packaged and frozen soups
- Desserts – Packaged baked goods
- Beverages – Softened water; carbonated beverages with sodium or salt added; regular tomato juice (V8); ask about alcoholic beverages
- Condiments – Table salt, lite salt, bouillon cubes, meat extract, taco seasoning, Worcestershire sauce, tartar sauce, ketchup, chili sauce, cooking sherry and wine, onion salt, mustard, garlic salt, soy sauce, tamari, meat flavoring or tenderizer, steak and barbecue sauce, seasoned salt, monosodium glutamate (MSG), Dutch-processed cocoa



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