



The Low Sodium (Salt) Diet

Sodium is a mineral that is abundant in our bodies as well as in the food we eat. The word “sodium” is often used interchangeably with “salt”. Salt is the chemical compound sodium chloride. Sodium is an essential nutrient to the body, but many people eat much more sodium than is needed. High sodium intake can cause problems for some people, especially those with high blood pressure or congestive heart failure. In these situations, the body has trouble getting rid of extra sodium. The extra sodium stays in the blood and tissues and acts like a sponge, holding the extra water in the body. This extra fluid may lead to swelling, high blood pressure, and shortness of breath.

Important Steps to Limit Sodium in the Diet

1. Avoid the use of the saltshaker. Learn to enjoy the natural flavors of foods.
2. Learn to read food labels for sodium content. Sodium is measured in milligrams (mg.). Your goal is to keep below 2000 mg. of sodium per day or whatever amount your doctor orders for you. There is 2300 mg. of sodium in one teaspoon of salt. Your body only needs 200 mg. per day (1/10 tsp.).
3. Sodium is found in preservatives, flavorings, and stabilizers and in many other forms in foods that have been processed. Eating more fresh foods helps to cut down on the extra sodium used in food treatment.
4. Remember that foods can be high in sodium without having a salty taste. One example is ketchup.
5. Water treated with a home water softener is not particularly high in sodium and can be consumed safely.

Tips for Eating Less Sodium

- Use seasonings such as pepper, lemon, garlic, or spices in cooking in place of salt.
- Replace the saltshaker with salt-free herb mixes such as Mrs. Dash.
- Choose unsalted snack foods.
- Check the sodium content on labels.
- Get a cookbook containing low-salt recipes.
- If you buy antacid tablets, choose a brand that’s sodium-free.
- Give yourself time to get used to eating less salt. You may not like it at first, but your tastebuds will adjust.

Examples of Foods High in Sodium

1. MAIN MEAL ITEMS
 - Canned vegetables except these labeled “low sodium.”
 - Cold cuts, hot dogs, ham, bacon, sausage, tuna, and other canned, processed, or Kosher meats.
 - Most cheeses.
 - Frozen casseroles, potpies, TV dinners, and other frozen prepared foods. (Choose those with 750 mg. or less).



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- Stuffing mixes, instant potatoes, pre-seasoned rice & noodle dishes.
 - Frozen vegetables with a seasoned sauce.
2. SNACKS & MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS
- Anchovies and sardines.
 - Canned and dried soups.
 - Bouillon and canned broth.
 - Crackers, chips, and salted snack foods.
 - Prepared sauce and gravy mixes.
 - Sauerkraut and pickled items.
 - V-8 juice, tomato juice.
3. SEASONINGS & CONDIMENTS
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|--------------------|------------------------------|
| • Celery Salt | • Soy Sauce |
| • Baking Soda | • Any seasoned salt |
| • Lemon Pepper | • Ketchup |
| • Onion Salt | • Chili Sauce |
| • Meat Tenderizers | • MSG (monosodium glutamate) |
| • Steak Sauce | • BBQ Sauce |
| • Garlic Salt | • Some salad dressings |
| • Mustard | |

Lite salt is not a good alternative as it still has a high salt content.

4. WHAT ABOUT RESTAURANT EATING?

Before ordering, ask the server if your food can be prepared without added salt. Also, stay away from sauces and gravies, as they are usually high in salt.

Try to avoid fast food restaurants, as their food choices are usually high in sodium. Many foods at Chinese restaurants are high in salt, but some offer low-salt alternatives.

5. WHAT ABOUT SALT SUBSTITUTES?

Salt substitutes can be helpful but should be avoided when using certain prescription medications. Check with your health care provider before using a salt substitute.

For detailed sodium information, go to <http://www.saltwatcher.com>.

