

Low Sodium Diet

Why is it necessary to decrease the amount of sodium in your diet?

Sodium is essential to your body, however, just like with anything else too much of a good thing can be harmful. About 11% of the sodium in the average U.S. diet comes from adding salt or other sodium-containing condiments to foods while cooking or eating. The majority of the sodium, 77%, comes from eating prepared or processed foods that contain the mineral. So even though you may limit the amount of salt you add to food, the food itself may already be high in sodium.

How much sodium do you need in your diet?

Various organizations, including the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, have published recommendations on daily sodium limits. Most recommend not exceeding the range of 1500 and 2400 milligrams (mg) a day for healthy adults. Talk to your doctor about the sodium limit that is best for you.

General guidelines for decreasing the amount of salt in your diet

- Avoid softened water for cooking and drinking since it contains added salt.
- Eat more fresh foods and fewer processed foods
- Remove salt from recipes whenever possible. Limit your use of sodium-laden condiments. Baked goods are an exception- leaving out the salt could affect the quality of the food.
- Use herbs, spices, and other flavorings to enhance foods. Move the salt shaker off the table. Use salt substitutes only with a Dr. permission. Remember that one teaspoon of salt contains 2,325 mg of sodium.
- Eat more home cooked meals.
- Read ingredient labels to identify foods high in sodium and opt for low sodium foods. Sodium containing compounds are often added to commercially processed foods. Some of those that are more commonly used are baking soda, brine, monosodium glutamate (MSG), baking powder, disodium phosphate, or sodium benzoate.
- Try to avoid medications that contain sodium. Antacids, laxatives, and cough remedies often contain sodium compounds.
- Avoid fast food restaurants because the foods they serve tend to be very high in sodium.

Choosing foods for a reduced sodium diet

Meats, Fish, Poultry, Legumes, Eggs, and Nuts

High sodium foods:

- Smoked, pickled, spiced, cured, salted, or canned meat, fish or poultry including bacon, ham, scrapple, canned tuna or salmon, cold cuts, frankfurters, sausage, sardines, caviar and anchovies.
- Frozen breaded meats and dinner, such as burritos and pizza, meat pies
- Canned entrees, such as ravioli, spam, and chili
- Salted nuts
- Any beans prepared with ham, bacon, salt pork, or bacon grease
- All canned beans

Low sodium alternatives:

- Any fresh or frozen beef, lamb, pork, poultry and fish
- Eggs and egg substitutes
- Low sodium peanut butter
- Dry peas and beans (not canned)
- Drained, water or oil packed canned fish or poultry, and low sodium canned fish

Dairy Products

High sodium foods:

- Buttermilk
- Regular and processed cheese, cheese spreads and sauces
- Cottage cheese
- Dutch processed chocolate milk

Low sodium alternatives:

- Milk, yogurt, ice cream, creamer, sour cream
- Low sodium cottage cheeses, cream cheese, ricotta cheese and mozzarella

Breads, Grains, and Cereals

High sodium foods:

- Breads and rolls with salted tops, sweet rolls
- Quick breads, self-rising flour, biscuit, pancake, waffle, and corn bread mixes
- Pizza, croutons, and salted crackers
- Prepackaged, processed mixes for potatoes, rice, pasta, stuffing, macaroni and cheese mix, canned spaghetti, frozen lasagna, instant potatoes.
- Instant hot cereals

Low sodium alternatives:

- Breads, bagels and rolls without salted tops
- Muffins and most ready to eat cereals
- All rice and pasta, but do not add salt when cooking
- Corn and flour tortillas and noodles
- Low sodium crackers and breadsticks
- Unsalted popcorn, chips, and pretzels

Vegetables and Fruits

High sodium foods:

- Regular canned vegetables and vegetable juices
- Olives, pickles, sauerkraut and other pickled vegetables
- Vegetables made with ham, bacon or salted pork
- Commercially prepared pasta and tomato sauces
- Packaged mixes, such as scalloped or au gratin potatoes
- Frozen vegetables in butter, sauces, or brine
- Crystallized and glazed fruit
- Maraschino cherries
- Fruit dried with sodium sulfite

Low sodium alternatives:

- Fresh and frozen vegetables without sauces
- Low sodium canned vegetables, sauces and juices
- Fresh potatoes
- Low salt tomato or V8 juice
- Most fresh, frozen and canned fruit and juices

Fats, Oils, and Desserts

High Sodium foods:

- Bottled salad dressings, canned or jarred gravies and sauces
- Salted butter or margarine
- Instant pudding and cake
- Commercially prepared and packaged baked goods

Low sodium alternatives:

- Unsalted butter or margarine
- Vegetable oils and sodium free salad dressings
- All desserts made without salt

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www.ucsfhealth.org/adult/edu/lowSodiumDiet.html

www.mayoclinic.com/health/sodium/NU00284/METHOD-print

www.gicare.com/Diets/Reduced-Sodium-Diet.aspx