

Cutting Back on Salt

Most people eat too much salt (sodium) each day. Too much salt increases your chances of high blood pressure. Most of the salt we eat is in processed and restaurant foods.

Foods High in Salt are:

- Fast food
- Pizza
- Hot dogs, bacon and sausage
- Deli meats like turkey, ham or roast beef
- Canned soups, vegetables and meats
- Pickled foods
- Salad dressings and marinades
- Frozen dinners
- Cheese
- Sauces and soy sauce
- Chips and pretzels
- Bread

You Can Cut Back on Salt

There are many ways to cut back on salt. Try a few of the following ideas.

1. Check Food Labels

Food labels show how much salt is in a food. Take the time to read labels at the grocery store. Look at the serving size. The information on the label is about this much food. You can compare similar foods to find the best choice.

On the label, look at **sodium**. This is another word for salt.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2 ounces (1 cup cooked)	
Servings Per Container 3	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	200
Total Fat	1g
Saturated Fat 0g	
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Cholesterol	0mg
Sodium	810mg
Total Carbohydrate	44g
Dietary Fiber 1g	
Sugars 2g	
Proteins	5g

Most people need less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. Check with your doctor about the right amount for you.

2. Try These Tips for Choosing Foods.

- **Canned vegetables and beans.** Drain and rinse canned vegetables. This removes some of the salt.
- **Frozen meals.** Choose frozen meals with 600 mg of sodium per serving or less.
- **Cheese.** Use less cheese in your recipes and meals. Compare brands and pick the one with less salt.
- **Processed or cured meats.** Limit hot dogs, bologna, salami, bacon, and sausage products.
- **Other deli meats (chicken, ham, roast beef, turkey).** Choose reduced-sodium meats. Be careful of portion size. When you make a sandwich or lettuce wrap, use 2-3 slices and then add other low-sodium ingredients like avocado, tomato, or peppers. When you can, prepare fresh chicken on the weekend and use it for sandwiches.
- **Condiments.** Soy or teriyaki sauce, dressings, tomato or spaghetti sauce, salsa, mustard, relish, catsup, taco sauce and seasoning, garlic salt, onion salt, hot sauce, and barbecue sauce are high in salt. Check labels and choose lower-sodium brands. Look for salt-free seasonings like garlic or onion powder and pepper to add flavor.
- **Soups and broths.** Make your own broths and soup at home. If you buy soup or broth from the store, look for reduced-sodium brands.
- **Mixes for pasta and rice.** Cook plain rice and pasta and add your own salt-free spices. If you are looking for free healthy recipes, go to diabetes.org/recipes.
- **Pickled foods (pickles, sauerkraut).** These foods are usually very high in sodium. One pickle wedge can have 500 mg of sodium! Limit these foods as much as possible.

3. Cook at Home.

Fresh foods that you cook at home have less salt than processed or restaurant foods. Fresh foods with less salt include:

- fresh fruit
- fresh vegetables
- dried beans, peas, and legumes
- whole grains like brown rice, wild rice, oats, quinoa, popcorn, and whole grain barley
- unsalted nuts and seeds
- fresh fish, chicken, turkey or meat without added salt. Check the nutrition label for sodium

Use spices and herbs instead of salt. Try some of these:

- Squeeze fresh lemon juice on vegetables, broiled fish, rice, or pasta.
- Try salt- or sodium-free lemon pepper or mesquite seasoning on chicken.
- Add cooked onion and garlic to add flavor to meats and vegetables.
- Add herbs to salads, pasta, or rice dishes to add flavor instead of adding salt or condiments.
- Marinate vegetables or cook them with balsamic vinegar.
- If a recipe calls for salt, cut the amount in half.

4. Put the Salt Shaker Away.

Remove the salt shaker from the table. Try your food without salting it first. It may be better than you think! You'll taste the natural flavors in your food. Keep the pepper out if you want to add a kick to your meal.

5. Make Some Simple Swaps

Here are some easy ways to cut down on salt:

- Buy unsalted natural peanut butter and almond butter.
- Choose unsalted nuts and seeds that are raw or dry roasted.
- Swap out a snack of chips or pretzels for a piece of fresh fruit with unsalted peanut butter or trail mix.
- Buy fresh meat or poultry on the weekend and cook it up using fresh herbs and spices. Store and portion it out for sandwiches, wraps and stews the following week.
- Buy spaghetti sauce labeled “no salt added”.

6. Eating out

Meals you eat away from home have a lot of salt. Try these tips when eating out:

- Save half of your meal for the next day. Because portions are large, this will cut how much salt and calories you eat.
- Ask your server to prepare food without salt.
- Ask for sauces on the side and use less.
- Look at the nutrition information online before you go.

FLAVORS TO TRY

To add a sweet flavor

(To foods like breads, cooked cereal, desserts, some stews, beans, legumes, or curries)

- Cinnamon
- Ginger
- Nutmeg
- Cloves
- Allspice
- Vanilla extract
- Orange peel zest

To add savory flavor

(To foods like chicken, fish, vegetables, beans, legumes, and pasta)

- Onion
- Garlic
- Capers
- Olives
- Sage
- Vinegar
- Wine
- Lemon peel zest

To add heat

(To foods like chili, sauces, meats, beans, legumes, grains, and soups)

- Black pepper
- Cayenne pepper
- Chili powder
- Cumin
- Crushed red pepper

To add fresh or citrus flavor

(To foods like meats, beans, legumes, vegetables, rice, salads, sauces, and dressings)

- Basil
- Cilantro
- Dill
- Ginger
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Rosemary
- Lemon peel zest
- Orange peel zest