

SODIUM

FACTSHEET

Sodium is necessary to regulate blood pressure and fluids in the body. It also is important in the transmission of nerve impulses. With a reduced sodium diet, you can lower your blood pressure and live a healthier lifestyle. It is possible to retrain your taste buds by gradually replacing added salt with herbs and spices and add health benefits without reducing taste and flavor. Adults should consume no more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. That's about one teaspoon of salt. Currently, the average salt in take is about 4,000 mg per day—nearly twice the recommended level.

Sources of Added Salt

While some foods naturally contain sodium such as vegetables and dairy products, most of the sodium we consume is from salt added during processing or preparation. Pre-packaged items and processed food frequently contain salt and sodium for preservation and flavor. Popular high sodium food choices include pickled foods, canned vegetables and soups, snack foods, cured meats, packaged mixes and frozen dinners. To moderate your sodium intake from processed food, read the Nutrition Facts panel on food packages. Also, look for no added salt or low sodium versions of your favorite foods.

Look for this label lingo:

Sodium Free – contains 5 mg or less of sodium per serving

Very Low Sodium – contains 35 mg or less of sodium per serving

Low Sodium – contains 140 mg or less of sodium per serving

Reduced Sodium – a product with the usual sodium content reduced by 25 percent

No Added Salt, Unsalted – a product with no salt added during processing; however, the product may still contain sodium

Tips for a Low-Salt Dinner

- Celebrate salt-free cooking!
Use herbs, spices and salt-free seasoning blends to bring out the best in your dish.
- Use salt shakers only for decoration.
The American Heart Association estimates that by simply setting aside the salt shaker, Americans could reduce salt and sodium intake by 30 percent.
- Indulge in foods naturally low in salt and sodium.
Emphasize fruits and vegetables to reduce sodium and gain the many health benefits they offer.
- Keep it fresh!
Choose fresh and frozen vegetables (without sauce) more often. Canned vegetables are typically higher in salt and sodium. Look for canned foods with no salt added.
- Drain and rinse canned foods.
- Read food labels.
Find Sodium-Free, Very Low Sodium or Low Sodium options. Check the Nutrition Facts panel for sodium content per serving.
- Watch for hidden salt and sodium.
Bouillon cubes, meat tenderizers, marinades, soy sauce and steak sauce can be loaded with salt and sodium.
- Enjoy unsalted options such as unsalted nuts and seeds
- Select fat-free or low-fat milk, low-sodium, low-fat cheeses, as well as low-fat yogurt.
- Ask for your dish to be prepared without salt when dining out.

References:

American Dietetic Association, (2010). Retrieved June 1, 2010, from <http://eatright.org>

American Heart Association, (2010). In Sodium (Salt or Sodium Chloride). Retrieved June 1, 2010, from <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4708>