



Sodium-Controlled Diet

OVERVIEW

Sodium Guidelines

Sodium is a mineral found naturally in foods and also added to foods. Sodium plays an important role in maintaining normal fluid balance in the body. A low-sodium diet is important to follow in order to control your heart failure symptoms and prevent future [heart problems](#).

- Limiting your sodium and fluid intake will help prevent and control the amount of fluid around your heart, lungs, or in your legs.
- When you carry extra fluid, it makes your heart work harder and may increase your blood pressure.

A low-sodium diet means more than eliminating the salt shaker from the table!

- One teaspoon of table salt = 2,300 mg of sodium

General Guidelines

- Eliminate the salt shaker.
- Avoid using garlic salt, onion salt, MSG, meat tenderizers, broth mixes, soy sauce, teriyaki sauce, barbeque sauce, sauerkraut, olives, pickles, pickle relish, bacon bits, and croutons.
- Avoid most "fast foods" and processed foods. Check the company's website for the nutritional information or read the package label for the sodium content.
- Use fresh ingredients and/or foods with no added salt.
- For favorite recipes, you may need to use other ingredients and delete the salt added. Salt can be removed from any recipe except for those containing yeast.
- Try orange, lemon, lime, pineapple juice, or vinegar as a base for meat marinades or to add tart flavor.

- Avoid convenience foods such as canned soups, entrees, vegetables, pasta and rice mixes, frozen dinners, instant cereal and puddings, and gravy sauce mixes.
- Select frozen meals that contain around 600 mg sodium or less.
- Use fresh, frozen, no-added-salt canned vegetables, low-sodium soups, and low-sodium lunchmeats.
- Look for seasoning or spice blends with no salt, or try fresh herbs, onions, or garlic.
- Do not use a salt substitute unless you check with your doctor or dietitian first, due to potential drug or nutrient interactions.
- Be aware of and try to limit the “Salty Six” (American Heart Association), which include:
 - Breads, rolls, bagels, flour tortillas, and wraps.
 - Cold cuts and cured meats.
 - Pizza.
 - Poultry (much poultry and other meats are injected with sodium. Check the Nutrition Facts for sodium content or read the package for a description of a solution, for example, "Fresh chicken in a 15% solution.")
 - Soup.
 - Sandwiches.

Learn to read food labels. Use the label information on food packages to help you make the best low-sodium selections. Food labels are standardized by the U.S. government’s National Labeling and Education Act (NLEA). Nutrition labels and an ingredient list are required on most foods, so you can make the best selection for a healthy lifestyle.

Review the food label below. Determine the total amount of sodium in this product, or ask your dietitian or healthcare provider to show you how to read food labels and apply the information to your personal needs.

The serving size represents the typical amount eaten by an adult.

| Nutrition Facts | | | |
|--|-------|---------------|-----|
| Serving Size | | 1 cup (228 g) | |
| Servings per container: | | 2 | |
| Amount Per Serving | | | |
| Calories | | 90 | |
| Fat Calories | | 30 | |
| % Daily Value* | | | |
| Total Fat | 3g | | 5% |
| Saturated Fat | 0g | | 0% |
| Trans Fat | 0g | | |
| Cholesterol | 0mg | | 0% |
| Sodium | 300mg | | 13% |
| Total Carbohydrate | 13g | | 4% |
| Dietary Fiber | 3g | | 12% |
| Sugars | 3g | | |
| Protein | 3g | | |
| Vitamin A | 80% | Vitamin C | 60% |
| Calcium | 4% | Iron | 4% |
| *Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower, depending on your calorie needs. | | | |

The sodium content is listed on the food label **per serving size**. Ignore the % daily value and focus on the amount of mg sodium per serving. Remember, if you eat more than one serving, you will get more sodium than the amount listed.

“Low sodium” = 140 mg or less per serving

“No sodium” = less than 5 mg per serving

Maintain a healthy body weight. This includes losing weight if you are overweight. Limit your total daily calories, follow a low-fat diet, and include physical activity on most, if not all days in order to maintain a healthy weight. Eating a healthy diet to either maintain or lose weight often means making changes to your current eating habits.

In order to make sure you are meeting your specific calorie needs, as well as vitamin and mineral needs, a registered dietitian can help. A registered dietitian can provide personalized nutrition education, tailor these general guidelines to meet your needs, and help you implement a personal action plan.

Restaurant Dining Tips

- Choose a restaurant that will prepare items to your request and substitute items.
- Plan ahead by reducing your serving sizes of foods high in sodium.
- Order food a la carte or individually to get only the foods you want.

Appetizers

- Avoid soups and broths.
- Request fresh bread and rolls without salty, buttery crusts.
- Avoid breaded items.

Salads/vegetables

- Avoid pickles, canned or marinated vegetables, olives, cured meats, bacon and bacon bits, seasoned croutons, cheeses, salted seeds, and nuts.
- Order salad dressings on the side and dip your fork in them before taking a bite of the food item.
- Request steamed vegetables.

Main courses

- Select meat, poultry, fish, or shellfish choices that include the words broiled, baked, grilled, roasted, and without breading.
- Request plain noodles or vegetable dishes.
- Ask the server about the low-sodium menu choices, and ask how the food is prepared.
- Request food to be cooked without salt or monosodium glutamate (MSG).
- Avoid restaurants that do not allow for special food preparation, such as buffet-style restaurants, diners, or fast food chains.
- Avoid casseroles and mixed dishes. Ask for gravies and sauces on the side or omit them all together.
- At fast food restaurants, choose the salad entrees or non-fried and non-breaded entrees, and skip the special sauces, condiments, and cheese.*
- Avoid breaded items.

**Avoid salted condiments and garnishes such as olives, pickles, and relish.*

Desserts

- Select fruit, sherbet, gelatin, and plain cakes.

Meat, Fish, Eggs, Poultry, Bean

- **Choose – 2-3 Servings Per Day**

- Fresh or frozen meat (beef, veal, lamb, pork), poultry, fish or shellfish.
- Low-sodium canned meat or fish.
- Eggs.
- Dried or frozen beans and peas.
- **Go Easy**
 - Low-sodium processed meats like ham, corned beef, bacon, sausage, luncheon meats, hot dogs.
 - Low-sodium frozen dinners (less than 600 mg sodium per meal).
- **Avoid**
 - Frozen, salted meat or fish.
 - Processed meats like ham, corned beef, bacon, sausage, luncheon meats, hot dogs, spare ribs, salt pork, ham hocks, meat spreads.
 - Canned meat or fish.
 - Breaded meats.
 - Canned beans like kidney, pinto, black-eyed peas, lentils.
 - Frozen dinners or side dishes with salt.

Dairy

- **Choose**
 - Naturally low-sodium cheese (swiss, goat, brick, ricotta, fresh mozzarella).
 - Cream cheese (light and skim).
- **Go Easy**
 - Milk (1% or skim).
 - Ice cream and frozen yogurt (light and skim).
 - Yogurt (light and skim).
 - Pudding, custard (light and skim).
 - Sour cream (light and skim).
- **Avoid**
 - Processed and hard cheeses (American, cheddar, muenster) and cheese spreads.

- Cottage cheese.
- Buttermilk.

Fruits & Vegetables

- **Choose – 5 or More Servings Per Day**
 - Fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits.
 - Fresh or frozen vegetables without added sauces.
 - Low-sodium tomato juice or V-8 juice.
 - Low-sodium tomato sauce.
- **Go Easy**
 - Regular tomato sauce.
- **Avoid**
 - Canned vegetables.
 - Canned beans.
 - Marinated vegetables such as sauerkraut, pickles, olives.
 - Regular tomato juice or V-8 juice.

Breads & Grains

- **Choose – 6 or More Servings Per Day**
 - Low-sodium breads.
 - Low-sodium cereals (old-fashioned oats, quick cook oatmeal, grits, Cream of Wheat or Rice, shredded wheat).
 - Pasta (noodles, spaghetti, macaroni).
 - Rice.
 - Low-sodium crackers.
 - Low-sodium bread crumbs.
 - Granola/li.
 - Corn tortillas.

- Plain taco shells.
- **Go Easy**
 - Regular bread.
 - Bagels.
 - English muffins.
 - Rolls.
 - Cold cereals.
 - Pancakes, waffles.
- **Avoid**
 - Croissants, sweet rolls, Danish, doughnuts.
 - Regular crackers.
 - Pasta and rice prepared with cream, butter, or cheese sauces.
 - Scalloped potatoes.
 - Instant cooked cereal packs.
 - Bread, baking and stuffing mixes.
 - Frozen or boxed mixes for rice, pasta and potatoes.
 - Regular bread crumbs.
 - Muffins, biscuits, cornbread.
 - Flour tortilla.

Sweets & Snacks

- **Choose - In Moderation**
 - Unsalted nuts.
 - Low-sodium potato chips, pretzels, popcorn, and other snacks.
 - Sherbet, sorbet, Italian ice, popsicles.
 - Fig bars, gingersnaps.
 - Jelly beans and hard candy.

- **Go Easy**
 - Angel food cake.
 - Home cakes, cookies, and pies.
 - Brownies.
- **Avoid**
 - Regular potato chips, pretzels, popcorn and other salted snacks.
 - Salted nuts and seeds.
 - Pork rinds.
 - Breaded meats.

Fats, Oils, & Condiments

- **Choose**
 - Low-sodium butter and margarine.
 - Vegetable oils.
 - Low-sodium salad dressing.
 - Homemade gravy without salt.
 - Low-sodium soups.
 - Low-sodium broth or bouillon.
 - Lemon juice.
 - Vinegar.
 - Herbs and spices without salt.
 - Low-sodium mustard.
 - Low-sodium catsup.
 - Low-sodium sauce mixes.
- **Go Easy**
 - Regular butter or margarine.
 - Regular salad dressing.

- Regular mustard, catsup.
- **Avoid**
 - Bacon fat, salt pork.
 - Pickles, olives.
 - Canned or instant gravy mixes.
 - Regular canned soups and broths.
 - Regular bouillon.
 - Soup mixes, seasoned salts.
 - Meat tenderizers and marinades.
 - Sodium preservatives or flavorings such as monosodium glutamate (MSG).
 - Lemon pepper.
 - Soy and teriyaki sauces.
 - Worcestershire sauce.
 - Steak sauce.
 - Barbeque sauce.
 - Shortening, lard.
 - Trans fats.

References:

- Dietary Guidelines for Americans (<http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines>) Accessed 5/24/2019.
- American Heart Association. Sodium blog (<http://sodiumbreakup.heart.org>) Accessed 5/24/2019.

Terms Linked In This Article:

- heart problems (<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/departments/heart>)

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