

## Low Sodium Diet

Sodium is another word for salt. Too much sodium in your diet makes your body hold on to too much fluid. This fluid can collect where it shouldn't: in your hands, legs, ankles, belly, and lungs. This may cause problems if you have liver, heart, or kidney disease.

Sodium comes from the salt shaker, but also in many foods you might not realize – even when you don't add extra salt. If your doctor tells you to reduce the salt in your diet, use this handout to guide your food choices.

### How Much Sodium is Too Much?

- Aim for a daily intake of 2000 milligrams (mg) *or less*.
- Keep in mind that one teaspoon of table salt contains 2,300 mg of sodium.
- It is a myth that sea salt and kosher salt contain less sodium than regular table salt. By weight, they are all the same and should all be used sparingly.
- Read labels for sodium content. Here are some tips:
  - Choose side dishes or snacks with 140 mg or less sodium per serving.
  - Each meal should have 600 mg sodium or less.

### Low Salt Eating Tips

Using less salt in cooking and at the table goes a long way, but you will also need to limit foods that have high amounts of sodium. Keep reading to find out which ones!

#### **Eat more:**

- ✓ Fresh foods
- ✓ Meals made at home
- ✓ Fresh and dried herbs and spices, instead of salt. Use them for seasoning foods during cooking and at the table. Examples: oregano, basil, cumin, chili powder, thyme, rosemary, parsley, and many more!
- ✓ Foods cooked with onion, garlic, peppers, carrots, and other vegetables instead of salt. Use these to season rice, pasta, potatoes, and meat dishes.
- ✓ Frozen vegetables and canned vegetables with no salt added.

## Eat less:

- ✓ Fast food and take-out like Chinese food and pizza
- ✓ Store bought canned foods, unless the label says “no salt added”
- ✓ Canned soups, unless they are Low Sodium varieties. See the section on reading labels below.
- ✓ Processed foods like potato chips and Oreos®
- ✓ Ready-made meals like boxed rices and TV dinners
- ✓ Jarred condiments like salsa, pickles, and olives

## Reading Nutrition Labels

You should get in the habit of checking food labels for the most up-to-date information. Sodium is always on the food label. These steps will help you figure out how much sodium is in a certain food:

1. **Number of servings and mg of sodium** – The label gives you the serving size and the number of servings in the package. The Nutrition Facts apply to the serving size listed on the label, not necessarily to the whole package. Remember, if the serving size is 1 cup and you eat or drink 2 cups, you must multiply the amount of sodium by 2. (The same goes for the calories, etc.)

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2 crackers (14 g)	
Servings Per Container About 21	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 60    Calories from Fat 15	
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 70mg	3%
Total Carbohydrate 10g	3%
Dietary Fiber Less than 1g	3%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 2g	
Vitamin A 0%	• Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 0%	• Iron 2%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories:    2,000    2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g    80g
Sat Fat	Less than 30g    25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg    300mg
Sodium	Less than 2400mg    2400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g    375g
Dietary Fiber	25g    30g

2. **Look at the ingredients** – Beware of products that list “salt,” “sodium,” and “monosodium glutamate” as one of the first five ingredients.

3. **Compare brands** – The sodium content of a particular food may vary from brand to brand. Be sure you are comparing similar serving sizes. Remember, those foods labeled as *reduced sodium* contain at least 25% less sodium than the regular variety. For example, a reduced sodium frozen entrée may have 600 mg sodium instead of 800 mg sodium in the regular version.

There are laws that regulate what certain words and phrases mean on the front of food labels. The table below explains what food companies are allowed to say. But remember, the serving you actually eat may not be exactly the same as the suggested serving on the nutrition label.

Label Term	Meaning
Sodium-Free	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
Very Low Sodium	35 mg or less of sodium per serving
Low Sodium	140 mg or less of sodium per serving
Reduced or less sodium	At least 25% less sodium than a serving size of the original product
Unsalted, no salt added, without added salt	May contain sodium as a natural part of the food, but no additional sodium or salt is added during processing

### What to Eat: The Specifics

Food Group:	Choose these lower sodium foods:	Limit these high sodium foods:
<b>Breads, Grains, and Cereals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loaf bread, dinner rolls, English muffins, bagels (limit to 2-3 servings daily)</li> <li>Plain pasta, noodles, plain rice</li> <li>White or sweet potatoes, unsalted</li> <li>Dried beans, peas, and lentils (<i>cook with onion and garlic for flavor</i>);</li> <li>Unsalted hot cereals like oatmeal and wheat farina</li> <li>Unsalted or low sodium snack foods (read labels, some chips are low in salt)</li> <li>Low sodium ready to eat cereals such as puffed rice, cornflakes, oat Os, shredded wheat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biscuits and Bisquick</li> <li>Pancake, muffin, and cornbread mixes</li> <li>Seasoned rice and noodle mixes like ramen noodles, Noodle Roni®, Rice-a-Roni®, macaroni and cheese</li> <li>Coating mixes like seasoned bread crumbs, Shake'n'Bake®</li> <li>Salted snacks like potato chips, nachos, peanut butter crackers, pretzels, pork rinds)</li> <li>Instant mashed potatoes</li> </ul>

<b>Food Group:</b>	<b>Choose these lower sodium foods:</b>	<b>Limit these high sodium foods:</b>
<b>Dairy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk</li> <li>• Yogurt</li> <li>• Cream cheese, especially whipped</li> <li>• Sour cream</li> <li>• Ice cream and frozen yogurt</li> <li>• Whipped cream</li> <li>• Low sodium cheeses: Swiss, mozzarella, grated Parmesan</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: Low Fat does not mean low sodium!</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buttermilk</li> <li>• Processed cheeses: American, Nacho cheese, Cheez Whiz<sup>®</sup>, Easy Cheese<sup>®</sup></li> <li>• Blue cheese</li> <li>• Pimento cheese</li> <li>• Cottage cheese</li> <li>• Queso fresco</li> <li>• Feta cheese</li> </ul> <p><i>Read the labels, cheese varies in sodium content.</i></p>
<b>Fruits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All fruits and fruit juices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need to limit any! (Canned fruits do not contain sodium.)</li> </ul>
<b>Fats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsalted butter</li> <li>• Lard</li> <li>• Olive or vegetable oil</li> <li>• Tub or squeeze margarine</li> <li>• Low sodium or homemade salad dressings</li> <li>• Mayonnaise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bacon and bacon grease</li> <li>• Salt pork</li> <li>• Fat back</li> <li>• Regular commercial salad dressings</li> </ul>
<b>Seasonings and condiments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh or dried herbs and spices</li> <li>• Vinegar, lemon juice and fruit juices for marinades</li> <li>• Onion and garlic (fresh, minced, dried in flakes or powdered)</li> <li>• Pepper, celery seed, and dried vegetable flakes</li> <li>• Mustard, low sodium bouillon</li> <li>• Spice and herb blends without added salt (Mrs. Dash<sup>®</sup>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salt, sea salt, lite salt, bouillon cubes</li> <li>• Potassium-containing salt substitutes (Nu-Salt<sup>®</sup>, No Salt<sup>®</sup>)</li> <li>• Seasoning salts (garlic salt, onion salt, celery salt)</li> <li>• Spice and herb mixes with added salt, including Old Bay<sup>®</sup></li> <li>• Commercially prepared sauces (teriyaki, soy)</li> <li>• Large amounts of ketchup or BBQ sauce</li> </ul>

## Some Foods Should Always Be Avoided

Some foods are extremely high in sodium. You should avoid these foods in your diet as much as possible. The good news is, there are reduced sodium varieties of many of these foods!

Processed deli meats	Salt pork
Sausage	Fat back
Bacon	Regular salad dressings
Hot dogs	Salt
Canned meats	Bouillon
Smoked or cured meats (pepperoni, salami, etc.)	Seasoning salts
Breaded meats, fish, poultry	Soy sauce
Processed cheese products (Cheez Wiz <sup>®</sup> , Velveeta <sup>®</sup> , etc.)	Worcestershire sauce
Pickles	Regular canned soups
Canned vegetables and vegetable juices that are not "reduced sodium" or "no salt added"	Dry soup mixes
Olives	Frozen meals
Biscuits	Fast food
Salted snack foods (pretzels, etc.)	Canned tomato products, spaghetti sauce, tomato, or V-8 <sup>®</sup> juice
Seasoned rice (Rice-A-Roni <sup>®</sup> , etc.)	Noodle or potato mixes