



Sodium and Your Health

Salt contains sodium, which can cause the body to retain fluid and cause high blood pressure. This makes the heart work harder and has other serious health consequences.

The good news is that by reducing the amount of sodium in your diet, you can help lower blood pressure to normal range and reduce your risks.

The Food and Drug administration recommends that healthy adults eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium or less per day. This is equal to about one teaspoon of salt.

The recommendation is 1500 mg of sodium per day for those with hypertension.

Nutrition Facts

Over 75% of dietary sodium comes from eating packaged and restaurant foods. Reading the Nutrition Facts on a Food Label can be a useful tool to monitor the amount of sodium in the foods you choose. Foods that are considered low sodium have 140 mg sodium or less.

A high sodium food has 480 mg of sodium or more in a serving on a nutrition label. Be sure to look at the serving size at the top of the label. If you eat two servings, then you get twice the amount of sodium listed on the label.

Avoid using products with sodium/salt listed as one of the first few ingredients. Ingredients are listed on a label in order from most content to least. If salt is listed as one of the last ingredients in a product, this would be a better choice.

Be aware that salt goes by many names and is the main ingredient in the following seasonings:

- Soy sauce
- Baking soda
- MSG • Brine
- Chili sauce
- Meat tenderizers
- Lemon pepper
- Sodium
- Bouillon
- Worcestershire sauce



Expert Tips

- 1 Taste your food before adding salt. Work to decrease your salt intake slowly and let your taste buds adjust. You can retrain your taste buds to taste the delicious, natural flavor of foods.
- 2 Try to use 1/2 the amount of salt in recipes. Use herbs, spices and salt-free herb and spice blends to add flavor when cooking.
- 3 Choose fresh or frozen. Limit canned, smoked, and processed foods which are high sodium.
- 4 Rinse canned vegetables before cooking. This removes a good amount of sodium before cooking.
- 5 Speak up at restaurants. Ask for meals to be prepared without salt and request sauces and dressings on the side, then use less of them. Try splitting your meal with someone or ask the waiter to put 1/2 the meal in a to-go container to take home. Less food means less sodium.

Beware of home remedies and over the counter drugs, such as baking soda or aka seltzer for indigestion. Ask your pharmacist about the sodium content of such remedies.

Salt substitutes: Always check with your physician before using salt substitutes that contain potassium chloride. Too much potassium is not recommended with some medications and medical conditions.

SOURCE:

heart.org/heartorg/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/fda.gov/ForConsumers

