

Reducing Sodium

Our bodies need sodium to work, but usually we get more sodium than we need. Sodium is a mineral that helps control the amount of fluid in our body and the beating of our heart. Eating too little sodium is usually not a problem for people because sodium is found in many of the foods we eat. Sodium occurs naturally in food and is added to food for flavor and to make our food stay fresh longer. Table salt is one of the most common sources of sodium in our diets.



Most people should eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium each day. 2300 mg of sodium is equal to about one teaspoon of salt. Many foods today are very high in sodium. Foods that are processed, cured, pickled, or smoked are known as “convenience foods” because they require little or no preparation. For general health, it is important to eat foods low in sodium. Reducing sodium, maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, and limiting alcohol and tobacco use, may reduce your risk for high blood pressure and heart disease.

Tips to Reduce Sodium in Your Diet

1. Limit the use of table salt. Try these suggestions:
 - Do not add salt to food or water while you are cooking.
 - Taste a food before you add salt.
 - Try one shake of the salt shaker rather than the number you are accustomed to shaking.
 - Add white rice to your salt shaker to slow the flow of salt.
 - Cover up some holes on the shaker lids.
 - Remove the shaker from the table.
2. Look for these words on food labels: “no salt added,” “reduced salt,” or “low or reduced sodium.”
3. Read the Nutrition Facts panel found on the label. Check the % Daily Value per serving for sodium. Try to select foods that provide 5% or less of sodium per serving.
4. Use fresh meats rather than cured or processed meats.
5. Use herbs, spices, and salt-free seasoning blend to flavor foods.
6. Cut back on instant flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which have salt added.
7. Use fewer condiments (ketchup, mustard, soy sauce, tartar sauce, salad dressing, etc.).
8. Rinse canned foods that are high in sodium with water such as green beans.
9. Become familiar with the sodium content of your favorite fast foods. Ask for a nutrition information brochure.

Know how. Know **now**.

Sodium Words in Ingredient Lists

Baking Soda (Sodium Bicarbonate)

Salt

Disodium Phosphate

Sodium Caseinate

Sodium Nitrate

Sodium Sulfite

Teriyaki Sauce

Words like “broth,” “cured,” “pickled,” and “smoked”

Baking Powder

Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)

Sodium Chloride

Sodium Citrate

Sodium Propionate

Soy Sauce



Mexican Chili Blend

Makes about 4 servings

(Use 2 Tablespoons in place of seasoning packets for chili with beans, enchiladas, tacos, fajitas, chicken, pork, and beef)

¼ cup chili powder

1 Tablespoon ground cumin

1 Tablespoon onion powder

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon ground red pepper

½ teaspoon cinnamon (optional)



Blend together. Store in a sealed container.

Nutrition Information per Serving (2 Tablespoons): 40 calories, 2 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 85 mg sodium, 7 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 1 g sugar, 2 g protein

Source: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005; http://www.healthierus.gov/dietary_guidelines