

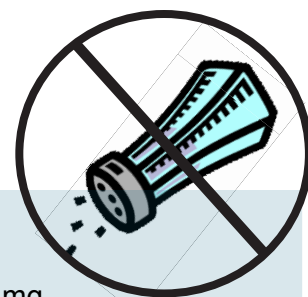
10 tips

MyPyramid

Nutrition Education Series

salt and sodium

10 tips to cut back



Salt is America's favorite food ingredient. Salt is used both in processed foods and home cooking. Americans consume about 2 to 4 teaspoons of salt a day. According to the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, healthy adults should have no more than 2,300 mg (or about 1 teaspoon) of sodium a day from all sources. Sodium plays a role in hypertension (or "high blood pressure") development in many individuals. Cutting back on salt and sodium is a good idea for everybody, even kids.

1 think fresh

Most of the sodium Americans eat is found in packaged foods. Eat less often highly processed foods—especially salty chips; cured meats, such as bacon, sausage, hot dogs, and luncheon meats; canned entrées, like chili and ravioli; and many soups.

2 enjoy full-flavored, home-prepared foods

Use herbs and spices to flavor foods. Preparing your own foods allows you to control the amount of sodium you eat. Make your own salad dressings with herb mixes instead of buying pre-packed ones.

3 fill up on foods naturally low in sodium

Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and cooked dry beans and lentils. Many Americans need to eat 3 cups—and for some people up to a total of 6 cups—of fruits and vegetables each day, depending on the amount of calories needed. Go to MyPyramid.gov to find out the amount of fruits and vegetables YOU need.

4 get enough, but not too much, of some other foods low in sodium

Find out the specific amount of foods YOU need from the Milk Group and the Meat & Beans Group by going to MyPyramid.gov. Choose fresh cuts of beef, pork, poultry, fish, or eggs—and eat just the amount you need. Choose low-sodium cheese. Choose fat-free milk or reduced fat yogurt.

5 learn to enjoy the natural taste of foods

Savor the flavor of simply prepared foods. Try cutting back on salt little by little—and pay attention to the natural tastes and textures of various foods.

6 skip the salt

Table salt (sodium chloride) is approximately 40% sodium. Just skip adding salt when cooking. Keep salt off the kitchen counter *and* the dinner table.

7 read the label

Use the Nutrition Facts label and the ingredients statement to find foods lower in sodium. Look for foods labeled "low sodium" or "reduced sodium." Foods with less than 140 mg sodium per serving can be labeled as low-sodium foods.

8 learn the lingo

Besides "salt," sodium comes in a range of forms. When reading ingredient statements, look for: sodium benzoate, sodium nitrite, sodium ascorbate, etc. Limit sodium and salt in food.

9 ask for low-sodium foods where you eat out or shop

Ask for what you want. The marketplace is changing and supermarkets and food manufacturers want to sell healthier foods. Many restaurants will prepare low-sodium foods at your request and will serve sauces and salad dressings on the side so you can use less. The more you make your low sodium demands known, the greater the chance that food companies will change their recipes.

10 pay attention to the condiments and seasonings you use

Some seasonings are just about as high in sodium as regular table salt. So, instead of onion salt, use onion powder or replace garlic salt with fresh garlic. Limit the amount of brined or pickled foods. Buy low-sodium soy sauce. Use only a sprinkling of flavoring packets instead of the entire packet.