Managing Your Sodium Goals:
Aim for 2300 Milligrams or Less Daily

What is sodium?

Sodium is a mineral that helps your body balance its fluids. Too much sodium in your diet can cause your body to hold on to fluid. This extra fluid can raise your blood pressure and increase your risk for cardiovascular disease, congestive heart failure, and kidney disease.

The major source of sodium in your diet is salt. Some sodium comes from using the salt shaker. A lot of salt is also already in foods that come in cans, boxes, or bags. Cutting back on these sources of salt can help reduce your sodium to 2,300 milligrams (mg) a day or less.

Nutrition label hints

You will need to read food labels to check for sodium. Pay attention to the serving size, as the milligrams of sodium will be listed per serving. Some food labels have special terms related to sodium. When you see these terms, this is what they mean:

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 3 oz. (85g)
Serving Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 200 — Calories from Fat 120

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 15g	**20 %**
Saturated Fat 5g	**28 %**
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	**10 %**
Sodium 650mg	**28 %**
Total Carbohydrate 30g	**10 %**
Dietary Fiber 0g	**0 %**
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	

Vitamin A 5% • Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 15% • Iron 5%

*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	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbonhydrate		300mg	375mg
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

- **Sodium free:** Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving.
- **Very low sodium**: 35 mg or less per serving.
- **Low sodium:** 149 mg or less per serving.
- **Lightly salted:** 50% less sodium than normally added
- **Reduced (or "less" or "lower in") sodium:** At least 25% less sodium than the regular product.
- **No added salt or unsalted:** No salt is added during the processing (this doesn't guarantee the food is sodium free).

How much sodium is okay?

Your healthcare providers recommend that you eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. (A single teaspoon of salt has about 2,300 mg of sodium.) Your body really only needs around 500 mg of sodium (about ¼ teaspoon of salt.) The average person in America consumes about 3,400 mg of sodium per day. That's about 1.5 teaspoons of salt a day, or about 7 times what your body actually needs! Eating less salt will help you reduce the amount of sodium you eat.

General guidelines

Follow these tips to reduce sodium in your diet:

- **Avoid adding salt to food you prepare or eat.**
- **Watch out for pre-made meals and packaged foods.** Many foods that come in cans, boxes, and bags contain large amounts of sodium. Be sure to read labels.
- **Watch out for medications that contain sodium.** Sodium is a common ingredient in some sedatives, antacids, headache remedies, and laxatives. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before using these medications.
- **Be extra careful at restaurants.** Get to know the restaurants in your area and the menu items they offer. When possible, check the nutrition of menu items online before you go. Generally, food that's baked or broiled, and made without sauces or gravies, will have less sodium.
- **Be aware!** Sea salt, kosher salt, Himalayan salt and other specialty salts are not any healthier than table salt.
- **Avoid drinking soft water whenever you can.** Water softeners may add a lot of sodium to your water. Drink hard water instead. (If you drink bottled water, check the label for sodium.)

The ABCs of herbs and spices

Instead of reaching for the salt shaker, try some of these sodium-free seasonings to enhance the natural flavors in food:

Allspice	stew, tomatoes, peaches, applesauce, gravies
Basil	fish, lamb, salads, soups, Italian sauces
Cayenne	soups, casseroles, cheese sauces, baked egg dishes, BBQ, poultry and lean meats
Cinnamon	fruits, pork, bread, sweet potatoes, squash, plain yogurt
Cumin	chili, Hispanic and Asian dishes, stews, beans
Curry	lean meats, chicken, fish, tomatoes, sauces, rice
Dill	fish, chicken, vegetables, potatoes, salads, pasta
Fennel	lean pork, squash, beets, pasta sauces, seafood dishes
Garlic	lean meats, fish, poultry, soups, salads, vegetables, pasta dishes
Ginger	lean pork, fish, fruits, carrots, pumpkin
Lemon or lime	(juice or zest) for fish, poultry, salads, vegetables, sauces
Marjoram	shellfish, veal, poultry, soups, stews, eggplant
Mint	lamb, fruit, salads, potatoes, bulgur, beans
Mustard (dry)	lean beef, ham, fish, salads, vegetable dishes
Nutmeg	potatoes, chicken, fish, cauliflower, broccoli, and cabbage dishes
Onion	lean meats, stews, vegetables, salads, soups, legumes
Oregano	sauces, Italian dishes, pizza, salads, vegetables
Paprika	fish, poultry, soups, salads, sauces, baked potatoes, beans
Parsley	cottage cheese, soups, salads, meats, fish, poultry, eggs
Rosemary	chicken, fish, lean pork sauces, stuffing, potatoes, peas, lima beans
Saffron	rice and potato dishes, breads, sauces, soups, vegetables, squash, tomatoes
Savory	salads, lean pork, lean ground meats, soups, vegetables, squash, tomatoes
Sesame	salads, breads, chicken, vegetables, casseroles
Tarragon	sauces, salad dressings, marinades, vegetables, beets, chicken, fish
Thyme	lean meats, poultry, sauces, soups, peas, salads, tomatoes

Other seasoning tips and ideas

- Long cooking times can cause herbs and spices to lose their flavors. Add herbs or spices to cooked foods within 1 hour of serving to get the most flavor.
- Powdered herbs are stronger than dried, and dried are stronger than fresh. As a guide: ¼ teaspoon of powdered herbs gives the flavor of ¾ to 1 teaspoon of dried herbs or 2 teaspoons of fresh herbs.
- You can store dried herbs — covered in a plastic or glass container and in a dry, cool spot out of direct sunlight — for up to a year.
- Try any of these items for a tenderizing marinade, or to flavor soups, stews, casseroles, starches or vegetables: Balsamic, apple cider, wine or herb vinegars; lemon, lime, or pineapple juice.
- Try adding lemon or lime zest for another layor of flavor or pre-made seasoning blends, such as Mrs. Dash, Lawry's Salt-Free 17 Seasoning, Dan-O's low-sodium seasonings

FOOD GROUP	ENJOY MORE OFTEN	LIMIT OR AVOID
Milk and milk products 	• **Whole, low fat, or non fat milk;** cocoa or chocolate milk; yogurt **Note:** Most milk has 100 to 130 mg sodium per 8-ounce serving)	• Dutch processed chocolate, buttermilk, malted milk
Breads 	• Whole grain or enriched breads **with less than 150mg sodium per slice.** • Homemade pancakes, waffles, and muffins made without adding salt • Unsalted pretzels and low-sodium crackers	• Bread, rolls, or crackers with visible **salted tops** • Bread products made with boxed mixes, self-rising flour, or salt • Breads with **more than 150 mg sodium per slice** • Store-bought crumbs or croutons
Cereals 	• Cooked cereal (not quick-cooking), prepared without salt • Dry cereals with **less than 250 milligrams** of sodium per serving	• Quick-cooking or instant cereals • Dry cereals with **more than 250 milligrams** of sodium per serving
Fruits 	• All fruits and fruit juices	• None
Vegetables 	• Fresh, frozen, and low-sodium canned vegetables • Canned vegetables and beans that have been drained and rinsed • Low-sodium vegetable juices	• Regular canned vegetables and canned tomato or vegetable juices • Sauerkraut or pickled vegetables • Frozen vegetables with sauce • Regular tomato sauce, puree, and paste
Potatoes and starches 	• White or sweet potatoes and low-salt potato chips • Brown and white rice and barley • Noodles, spaghetti, macaroni, and other pastas • Homemade bread stuffing when prepared with day-old bread	• Potato casserole mixes and frozen or dehydrated potatoes • Salted potato chips and salty snacks • Instant rice and pasta mixes • Commercial casserole and stuffing mixes
Meat, poultry, fish, and meat substitutes 	• Fresh or fresh-frozen beef, lamb, pork, veal, game, and poultry • Fresh-water or fresh-frozen fish (without breading) and shellfish • Lower or reduced-sodium canned tuna and salmon or sardines • Dried beans, peas • Peanut butter with less than 95 mg sodium per serving • Eggs • Lower-sodium cheeses (Swiss cheese is lower in sodium than most other hard cheeses)	• Smoked, salt-cured, dried, canned, or frozen meat, fish, or poultry • Bacon, ham, cold cuts, hot dogs, sausages, chipped or corned beef • Kosher-prepared meat • Sardines, anchovies, marinated herring, pickled meats or eggs • Regular canned tuna or salmon • Most hard and processed cheese, cheese spreads • Peanut or nut butters with **more than 95 mg of sodium per serving** • Frozen meals with **more than 600 mg sodium per serving.**

FOOD GROUP	ENJOY MORE OFTEN	LIMIT OR AVOID
Fats 	• Unsalted butter or margarine with **less than 100 mg of sodium per serving** • Salad dressings with **less than 200 mg of sodium per serving** • Vegetable oil, shortening • Light and heavy cream, sour cream	• Salted butter, higher-sodium margarine or salad dressings, bacon fat, salt pork • Snack dips made with cheese, bacon, or buttermilk • Instant soup mixes
Soups 	• Unsalted, homemade soups and cream soups made with recommended foods • Low-sodium broth, bouillon, and consommé • Low-sodium canned or dehydrated commercial soups	• Regular bouillon, broth, and consommé • Regular canned or dehydrated commercial soups
Beverages 	• All beverages, other than those listed at right • Low-sodium tomato or vegetable juice	• Commercially softened water, foods or beverages made with softened water • Sports drinks • Regular tomato or vegetable juice
Sweets and desserts 	• All sweets and desserts except those made from foods that are not recommended	• Pastries prepared with salted crusts • Salted caramel or chocolate • Packaged dessert mixes
Other 	• Pepper, herbs, spices, vinegar, lemon or lime juice, and salt-free seasoning mixes • Low-sodium versions of these condiments: ketchup, mustard, lower-sodium soy sauce, teriyaki sauce, homemade low-sodium soy sauce, chili sauce, fresh-ground horseradish, Tabasco sauce • Unsalted or lightly-salted nuts, seeds, popcorn, and pretzels	• Garlic salt, onion salt, celery salt, sea salt, rock salt, and Kosher salt, “lite” salt • Any other seasoning containing salt and sodium compounds • Monosodium glutamate (Accent) • Regular versions of: ketchup, chili sauce, horseradish, pickles, relishes, and olives • Gravy and sauce mixes • BBQ, soy, teriyaki, Worcestershire, and steak sauce • Salted nuts, seeds, popcorn, and pretzels • Commercially prepared and convenience foods

Budget your daily sodium. Aim for 500 to 600 mg sodium for each meal, and 100 mg per snack. By choosing the lower sodium, low-sodium, or salt-free options, you may find you have more freedom with food choices.