

Sodium-Restricted Daily Eating Plan: 2,000 milligrams or less recommended per day

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 you cut your sodium to 2,000 milligrams (mg) a day or less. This sheet will help you learn how to do that.

How much sodium is okay?

Your healthcare providers recommend that you eat less than 2,000 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 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt), but most people get 4,000 to 6,000 mg per day. That's almost 3 teaspoons of salt and around 10 times what your body needs! Eating less salt will help you reduce the amount of sodium you eat.



General guidelines

Follow these tips to get less sodium in your daily diet:

- **Don't add salt to food you prepare or eat.** You can use salt substitutes if your doctor says it's okay, but don't use very much. Don't use them as you prepare food. Avoid "lite salt," which is still a $\frac{1}{2}$ salt mix.
- **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.
- **Avoid sea salt.** It's not any healthier than table salt.
- **Avoid 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.)

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:



- **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.
- **Reduced sodium:** 25% less sodium than the original version of the product.
- **No added salt or unsalted:** No salt is added during the processing (this doesn't guarantee the food is sodium free).

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, Asian meat 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/Lime juice	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

Herb Hints

- 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: $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of powdered herbs gives the flavor of $\frac{3}{4}$ 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.
- Wine and herb vinegars make a great marinade for meats and sprinkled on vegetables.
- Lemon, lime, and pineapple juice also make a good marinade that you can sprinkle on vegetables for a unique taste.



FOOD GROUP	FOODS RECOMMENDED	FOODS TO AVOID
<p>Milk and milk products</p> <p>(Limit to 2 cups of milk daily)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole, low fat, or skim cocoa, chocolate, yogurt, or eggnog • Substitute 4 ounces evaporated or condensed milk or ½ cup dry milk powder for 8 ounces milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dutch processed chocolate, buttermilk, malted milk
<p>Breads</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Except those listed in foods to avoid, all whole grain or enriched breads as well as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Homemade pancakes, waffles, and muffins made without adding salt – Unsalted pretzels and low-sodium crackers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread, rolls, or crackers with visible salted tops • Bread products made with boxed mixes, self-rising flour, or salt • Store-bought crumbs or croutons
<p>Cereals</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked cereal (not quick-cooking), prepared without salt • Dry cereals with less than 250 milligrams of sodium per serving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick-cooking or instant cereals • Dry cereals with more than 250 milligrams of sodium per serving
<p>Fruits</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All fruits and fruit juices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
<p>Vegetables</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh, frozen, and low-sodium canned vegetables • Low-sodium vegetable juices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular canned vegetables and vegetable juices • Sauerkraut or pickled vegetables • Frozen vegetables with sauce • Regular tomato sauce, puree, and paste
<p>Potatoes and starches</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White or sweet potatoes and low-salt potato chips • Enriched rice and barley • Noodles, spaghetti, macaroni, and other pastas • Homemade bread stuffing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potato casserole mixes and frozen or dehydrated potatoes • Salted potato chips and salty snacks • Instant rice and pasta mixes • Commercial casserole and stuffing mixes
<p>Meat, poultry, fish, and meat substitutes</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh or fresh-frozen beef, lamb, pork, veal, game, and poultry • Fresh-water or fresh-frozen fish (without breading) and shellfish • Low-sodium canned tuna and salmon or sardines • Unsalted peanut butter, dried beans, peas • Eggs • Low-sodium cheese, cream cheese, ricotta cheese, rinsed and drained cottage cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Hard and processed cheese, cheese spreads • Peanut butter, frozen dinners

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<p>Fats</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsalted butter or margarine • Unsalted salad dressings, mayonnaise-type salad dressings • Vegetable oil, shortening • Light and heavy cream, sour cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter, margarine, salad dressings, bacon fat, salt pork • Snack dips made with cheese, bacon, or buttermilk • Instant soup mixes
<p>Soups</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsalted, homemade soups and cream soups made with recommended foods and milk allowance (limit milk products to 2 cups per day) • Low-sodium broth, bouillon, and consommé • Low-sodium canned or dehydrated commercial soups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular bouillon, broth, and consommé • Regular canned or dehydrated commercial soups
<p>Beverages</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All beverages, other than those listed at right, but drink milk within the set recommendations (see “Milk and Milk Products” on page 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercially softened water, foods or beverages made with softened water • Sports drinks
<p>Sweets and desserts</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sweets and desserts except those made from foods that are not recommended • With desserts made from milk, the milk needs to be counted as part of the 2 cups daily allowance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastries prepared with salted crusts • Salted caramel or chocolate
<p>Other</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pepper, herbs, spices, vinegar, lemon or lime juice, and salt-free seasoning mixes • Low-sodium versions of these condiments: catsup, mustard, chili sauce, fresh-ground horseradish, Tabasco sauce, and mustard powder • Unsalted nuts, seeds, popcorn, and pretzels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garlic salt, onion salt, celery salt, sea salt, rock salt, and Kosher salt • Any other seasoning containing salt and sodium compounds • Monosodium glutamate (Accent) • Regular versions of: catsup, chili sauce, mustard, horseradish, pickles, relishes, and olives • Kitchen Bouquet, gravy and sauce mixes • BBQ, soy, teriyaki, Worcestershire, and steak sauce • Salted nuts, seeds, popcorn, and pretzels • All commercially prepared and convenience foods

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