



Low Sodium Diet Tips

Sodium is a mineral found in table salt and sea salt. It is found in some foods naturally, and in additives or preservatives. Too much sodium intake can cause fluid retention and high blood pressure.



Sodium intake should not exceed 2300 mg per day. Keep in mind that a teaspoon of salt is equal to 2300 mg of sodium.

Salt and Sodium Savers

- Use less sodium in cooking.



Try citrus fruits, vinegar, black pepper, herbs, or spices to add flavor to foods because they are very low in sodium. When choosing flavorings and seasonings, make sure that your choices do not contain the words salt or sodium. For example, choose onion powder instead of onion salt, and do not choose seasoning salt. Use sodium free herb blend seasonings instead of seasonings that contain salt or sodium.

- Add less sodium at the table.



It may seem difficult at first, but try to use other seasonings such as pepper rather than salt at the table. Condiments and toppings such as ketchup, pickles, olives, soy sauce, and teriyaki sauce are high sodium condiments and should be used according to your specific sodium limits. Discuss this with your dietitian.

- Ask your doctor before using a salt-substitute.

Salt substitutes that look and taste like salt usually contain potassium. Too much potassium can cause serious problems for people who have certain medical conditions. Some medications can require a low potassium intake.



- Read food labels.

Reading food labels will show you how much sodium is in the food you eat. Be sure to pay attention to serving size and servings per container. Food labels will help you compare two choices and choose the lower sodium choice.

- Shop smart.

When shopping, look for “reduced-sodium” or “no-added salt” on the food label. Be sure to choose lower sodium versions of canned soup, tomato sauce, and canned vegetables. If unable to buy low sodium versions, drain and rinse canned foods under running water to remove excess sodium.



- Snack smart.

Select fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, and unsalted versions of chips, crackers, pretzels, or nuts as snacks.

- Meats and cheese vary in sodium content.

Eat fresh meats, chicken, and fish instead of canned or processed items. Limit intake of lunchmeats, or cured and smoked meats such as ham, bacon, brats, or sausage. Cheese is generally a high sodium food choice, but processed cheeses tend to be the highest.



- Be selective when eating out.

When eating out, ask for food to be prepared without added salt. Also, ask for dressings or condiments “on the side” so you can control the amount you eat.

Contact your local VA dietitian for more information.