

Sodium: Look at the Label

Over 75% of dietary sodium comes from packaged foods and foods you eat in restaurants.

Use the Nutrition Facts Label!

- High levels of sodium may seem “hidden” in packaged food, particularly when a food doesn’t “taste” salty — but sodium is not hidden on the **Nutrition Facts Label!**
- Check the **Percent Daily Value (%DV)** for sodium in the food you are considering.* You can see at a glance if the sodium in one serving of food contributes a little — or a lot — to the recommended amount you should eat in a day.

Use the %DV on the Nutrition Facts Label to compare food products, and remember: 5% DV or less of sodium is **LOW**, and 20% DV or more of sodium is **HIGH**. Also, ask to see the nutrition information in restaurants and choose a lower sodium option.

Choose Less Sodium

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 package (255g)
Servings Per Container 1

Amount Per Serving

Calories 220 Calories from Fat 45

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 5g 8%

Saturated Fat 2g 10%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 20mg 7%

Sodium 480mg 20%

Total Carbohydrate 37g 12%

Dietary Fiber 5g 10%

Sugars 7g

Protein 10g

* Percent Daily Values are based on a
2,000 calorie diet.

**20% DV
or more
per serving
is high!**



Sodium and Health

Increased sodium intake can increase your risk of developing high blood pressure (also known as hypertension), which can lead to heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness. But using the Nutrition Facts Label and eating less sodium can often help lower blood pressure — which can, in turn, help you reduce your risk of these diseases!

* The %DV is based on 100% of the recommended amount of sodium, which is less than 2,400 milligrams (mg) per day.

What is the daily recommended amount of sodium for adults?

- The general population should consume **no more than 2,300** milligrams of sodium a day (about a teaspoon of table salt)
- In general, individuals with hypertension, blacks, & middle-aged & older adults should limit intake to **1,500 mg** of sodium/day.
- The exceptions to this guideline are people whose doctors have put them on a diet that requires **even less** sodium because of a medical condition. Always follow your doctor’s recommendation about how much sodium you can have daily.

Are (potassium chloride containing) salt substitutes safe?

Many salt substitutes contain potassium chloride and can be used by individuals to replace salt in their diet. There are no known undesirable effects in healthy people who consume a lot of potassium; however, potassium could be harmful to people with certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, kidney disease, and heart disease. Check with your doctor before using salt substitutes. (Note: This does not apply to herb and spice salt substitutes which do not contain potassium.)

What steps can I take to lower my salt intake?

1. Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.
2. Consume foods that are rich in potassium. The recommended intake of potassium for adolescents and adults is 4,700 mg/day. Potassium-rich foods include leafy, green vegetables and fruits from vines.
3. Flavor food with **pepper and other herbs and spices** instead of salt (See next page).
4. Choose unsalted snacks.
5. Read food labels and choose foods low in sodium.

From: FDA [Sodium: Look at the Label](#) and [Consumer Updates](#)

Lowering Salt in Your Diet

1. Avoid prepared foods.

a. Processed foods make dinner prep easy. But they account for **75%** of the sodium in the American diet. This includes: Prepared mixes/ Rice dishes/ Soups/ Canned foods.

b. A healthy level of sodium is 140 mg or less per serving. If you use prepared foods, limit sodium by:

- Buying products labeled "low salt," "reduced salt," or "no salt added."

- Checking the nutrition labels of cereals, bread, and prepared mixes.

- Rinsing canned foods to wash off some of the sodium.

- Avoiding cured meats like ham and bacon, pickles, olives, and other foods prepared in salt.

c. Also, use small amounts of condiments like ketchup, mustard, and soy sauce. Even the low salt versions are often high in sodium.

2. Bring on the fresh produce. Fruits and vegetables are a great source of flavor and nutrition.

a. Plant based foods: carrots, spinach, apples, and peaches are naturally salt free.

b. Sundried tomatoes, dried mushrooms, cranberries, cherries, and other dried fruits are bursting with flavor. Use them in salads and other dishes to add zest.

3. Try salt free cooking.

a. Explore cooking with salt substitutes.

- Add a splash of lemon and other citrus fruits, or wine, to soups and other dishes. Or use them as a marinade for meats.

- Avoid onion or garlic salt. Instead, use fresh garlic and onion, or onion and garlic powder.

- Try different types of pepper, including black, white, green, and red.

- Experiment with vinegars (white and red wine, rice wine, balsamic, and others). For the most flavor, add it at the end of cooking time.

- Toasted sesame oil adds a savory flavor without added salt.

b. Read the labels on spice mixes. Some have added salt.

c. To add a little heat and spice, try: Dry mustard/Fresh chopped hot peppers/A sprinkle of paprika, cayenne pepper, or dried hot red pepper

4. Help yourself to herbs and spices. Try these flavors to liven up your meals without salt.

a. Herbs and spices on vegetables:

- Carrots: Cinnamon, cloves, dill, ginger, marjoram, nutmeg, rosemary, sage

- Corn: Cumin, curry powder, paprika, parsley

- Green beans: Dill, lemon juice, marjoram, oregano, tarragon, thyme

- Tomatoes: Basil, bay leaf, dill, marjoram, onion, oregano, parsley, pepper

b. Herbs and spices on meat:

- Fish: Curry powder, dill, dry mustard, lemon juice, paprika, pepper

- Chicken: Poultry seasoning, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme

5. Adjust to less salt. You will notice a difference when you first start cooking without salt. Fortunately, your sense of taste will change. After a period of adjustment, most people stop missing salt and start enjoying the other flavors of food.

From: NIH [MedLine Plus](#) and National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute *Flavor That Food*,
Alternative Names: DASH diet