

Reducing Salt and Sodium

The DASH Eating Plan

Everyone can benefit from limiting the amount of sodium in their diet, but it is especially important if you have hypertension. Sodium attracts water, so wherever sodium goes, water follows. If you have a high amount of sodium in your blood, then water will follow it, thus increasing your blood pressure and the amount of blood your heart will have to pump which makes it work harder. Here are some tips to help you reduce the amount of salt in your diet. One thing to keep in mind is that as you decrease the amount of salt in your diet, overtime, your taste buds will adapt. So you won't need as much salt as you previously used in order for things to taste good to you.

Tips on Table Salt:

- Take the salt shaker off the table. Taste the food before you add any salt and see if it is fine without salt added.
- Cook without salt.
- Discuss the use of salt substitutes with your doctor. These often contain potassium in place of the salt, which may interfere with some medications.

Limiting salt when you cook

- Avoid any seasonings that taste salty. This includes:
 - Bouillon cubes
 - Cooking sherry or cooking wine
 - Chili sauce
 - Meat tenderizer
 - Seasoned salts
 - Soy sauce
 - Steak sauce
 - Tamaric
 - Worcestershire sauce
- Try cooking with low-salt seasonings, such as lemon juice, vinegar and herbs.
- Drain and rinse canned foods before preparing them to remove some of the salt.
- Substitute fresh fruits and vegetables and other low-sodium foods for canned and processed foods. For example, try fresh green beans instead of canned, and plain white or brown rice instead of flavored rice (such as chicken- or beef-flavored, or any rice that comes with a packet of powdered seasoning.)
- Be spicy instead of salty. In cooking and at the table, flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends. Start by cutting salt in half.
- Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt. Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have added salt.

Avoid high-sodium foods

- Buy fresh, plain frozen or canned with “no-salt-added” vegetables.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat rather than canned, smoked, or processed types.
- Choose ready-to-eat breakfast cereals that are lower in sodium.

Reducing Salt and Sodium

The DASH Eating Plan

- Limit cured foods (such as bacon and ham), foods packed in brine (such as pickles, pickled vegetables, olives, and sauerkraut), and condiments (such as MSG, mustard, horseradish, catsup, and barbecue sauce). Limit even lower sodium versions of soy sauce and teriyaki sauce - treat these condiments as you do table salt.
- Choose “convenience” foods that are lower in sodium. Cut back on frozen dinners, mixed dishes such as pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths, and salad dressings - these often have a lot of sodium.

Choosing low-sodium alternatives

- Read food labels to check salt content (listed as “sodium”).
- Check your medicine cabinet as well. People with heart failure should avoid headache or heartburn medicines that contain sodium carbonate or bicarbonate.
- Use reduced sodium or no-salt added products. If the label says “low-salt” or “low-sodium” it means that the food contains 140 mg or less of sodium per serving. Be sure to read the food label to see how much it actually has.