

Putting a halt on too much salt



We've been talking about sodium in your diet and the importance of using it in moderation, especially if you have high blood pressure, other medical conditions or prescriptions that are impacted by your sodium intake. You may think that if you have a taste for salt it will be tough to reduce it in your diet. However, as you decrease the amount of salt you eat, your taste for salt will slowly decrease and you won't miss it.

Think options

Instead of salt, you can add spices to foods you make to boost the flavor while decreasing the amount of salt you use when cooking. Try these suggestions for foods and beverages to lower the sodium in your diet:

Meat, poultry, fish – All fresh or frozen lean meats, poultry, fish, shellfish, unsalted lean pork, egg whites, water-packed tuna and canned salmon without added salt

Meat substitutes – Unsalted nuts or seeds; low-sodium peanut butter; dried peas, beans and lentils

Main dish items – Homemade dishes without added salt or vegetables canned without added salt as ingredients; unsalted fat-free broth, low-sodium bouillon, low-sodium canned soups, homemade soups without added salt or canned vegetables as ingredients

Dairy products – Fat-free or low-fat milk; low-sodium, low-fat cheeses; low-fat yogurt



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Making it practical



Vegetable products – Fresh, frozen or low-sodium canned products, low-sodium tomato juice and other low-sodium vegetable juices, and unsalted potato chips

Bread products – Whole grains or enriched breads and cereals; unsalted crackers, popcorn, pretzels, and breadsticks

Miscellaneous – Pepper, spices, flavorings, vinegar, lemon juice, ketchup and mustard with no added salt, low-sodium pickles, fresh ground horseradish, hot pepper sauce, garlic and onion powders, all fruits and fruit juices, low-sodium commercial salad dressings, homemade salad dressings without added salt, and regular margarines or oils

Hidden sources

To watch your sodium intake, check for both natural and added sodium content. Table salt is listed as sodium chloride on the Nutrition Facts food label. If a food does not have a Nutrition Facts panel to show how much sodium is in a serving of food (for example, some prepared foods at the grocery store), read the ingredient label. You should watch for the words “soda” (soda refers to sodium bicarbonate or baking soda) and “sodium” and the symbol “Na” on labels. These products contain sodium compounds.

Warning

Some drugs contain large amounts of sodium, too. Make a habit of carefully reading the ingredient list on the label of all over-the-counter drugs and the warning statement to see if sodium is in the product. A statement of sodium content must appear on labels of antacids that have five milligrams or more per dosage unit (tablet, teaspoon, etc.). Be sure to ask your doctor if you should avoid certain over-the-counter medications.

Want to spice up your life? You can by bringing something new to the table—less added salt in your diet.