

Hold the Salt

Salt contains sodium. Your body needs small amounts of sodium to work properly. Most people in Canada eat more than two times as much sodium as they need.

Sodium is found naturally in all foods. However, most of the sodium and salt we eat is from packaged, processed, and restaurant foods. We get even more sodium when we add salt during cooking or at the table.

Eating less sodium can lower your blood pressure. Lower blood pressure is important to lower your risk of a heart attack, heart failure, stroke, and to keep your kidneys healthy.

How much sodium do we need?

Limit the sodium you eat to less than 2300 mg every day. The closer you can get to 1500 mg per day the better.

Use the guidelines in this handout to start eating less sodium.

Cutting back on the sodium in your diet

- Choose fresh foods, and foods with no salt added.
- Prepare food at home more often. Use low sodium ingredients.
- Eat less processed and packaged foods.
- Read food labels to choose foods that are lower in sodium.
- Eat less restaurant and fast food.
- Eat less salty snack foods.
- Use little or no salt in cooking. Use no salt at the table.
- Choose other ways to flavour your food. Try garlic, onion, herbs, spices, lemon juice, vinegar, or salt-free seasonings instead of salt.

What about sea salt and rock salts? All types of salt (sea salt, Himalayan salt, fleur de sel) have the same amount of sodium as table salt. It is best not to add any salt to food.

Salt substitutes: Some salt substitutes have potassium in them. This is a problem in some medical conditions. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or dietitian before using a salt substitute.

Read food labels

Reading food labels can help you cut down on the sodium in your diet.

On the Nutrition Facts table

- Foods with a % Daily Value higher than 15% are high in sodium.
- Compare brands. Choose foods with lower % Daily Value and smaller amounts of sodium.

Nutrition Facts	
Amount	% Daily Value
1 cup (250 mL)	
Calories 150	
Fat 0 g	0%
Cholesterol 5 mg	
Sodium 105 mg	4%
Carbohydrate 29 g	10%
Fibre 0 g	0%
Sugars 26 g	
Protein 6 g	

Low sodium label claims

- Look for foods labelled as “sodium-free” or “low sodium”.
- Be cautious of foods labeled as “reduced sodium,” “less sodium” or “lightly salted”. These may still be high in sodium.
- It is best to also check the Nutrition Facts table for the amount of sodium in a product.

Limit or avoid these high sodium foods when you're cutting back on sodium:

Vegetables and Fruit

- Vegetable juices
- Canned and dried soups
- French fries, packaged potato mixes
- Canned vegetables, tomato sauces

Grain Products

- Canned pasta products
- Instant hot cereals
- Salted crackers
- Seasoned rice, pasta, and stuffing mixes

Milk and Alternatives

- Processed cheese slices and cheese spreads
- Blue cheese, Roquefort cheese
- Cottage cheese, regular
- Feta cheese

Meat and Alternatives

- Cured and processed meats: ham, bacon, sausages, pepperoni, hot dogs, smokies
- Canned meat and fish
- Salted nuts

Other high sodium foods

- Salt, sea salt
- Fast food, pizza
- Prepared sauces or sauce mixes
- Seasoning mixes that have salt added, such as garlic salt, onion salt, and celery salt
- Condiments: mustard, ketchup, and BBQ sauce
- Sauces like soy, teriyaki, hoisin, or fish sauce
- Snack foods such as salted chips, nachos, pretzels, popcorn, and crackers
- Pickles, olives, and sauerkraut
- Bouillon cubes and broth mixes

Getting used to low sodium eating

When you start cutting back on the sodium and salty foods in your diet you may find things do not taste the same. Over time your taste buds will change and you won't miss the taste of salt in your food. You may even find new flavours that you like! Once your taste buds change, many foods, especially processed and restaurant foods, will taste too salty.

Menu make-over

A few changes can make a big difference in the amount of sodium you eat.

High Sodium Meal	Sodium (mg)	Low Sodium Meal	Sodium (mg)
Multigrain bread, 2 slices (70 g)	294	Multigrain bread, 2 slices (70 g)	294
Deli meat, 2½ oz (75 g)	900	Leftover roasted meat, like chicken or beef, 2½ oz (75 g)	64
Cheddar cheese, 1½ oz (50 g)	310	Lettuce and cucumber	1
Mustard, 1 tsp (5 mL)	60	Mustard, 1 tsp (5 mL)	60
Dill pickle, 1 small (37 g)	324	Carrot sticks, 8 carrots (80 g)	62
Total	1888	Total	481

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