

All About the Salt

Sodium is a nutrient naturally found in all foods. Salt is made in part from sodium. Our body only needs a small amount of sodium everyday to stay healthy. We need sodium to move our muscles, and control blood pressure. Most Canadians eat twice the amount of sodium they need. Eating too much sodium can cause your body to keep extra fluid. If you have heart, liver or kidney problems this can make it harder for your heart to pump, and make it harder to breathe. Eating less sodium may also help lower your blood pressure, which can reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke.

Where does Sodium come from?

Most of the sodium in our diet comes from salt in the processed and packaged foods. Foods from restaurants are also high in salt. The rest of the salt we eat comes from the salt we add in cooking, or at the table.

Finding Sodium

You can use food labels to find out how much sodium is in the foods in your diet, and can help you reduce how much sodium you eat. Look for claims on the front of foods such as “sodium-free”, “low sodium”, or “reduced sodium”. Reduced sodium does not mean the food is low in sodium.

Ingredient List

On the ingredient list look for:

- Sodium
- Salt
- Soda

Ingredients are listed from most to least. Choose foods that have sodium at the end of the list most often.

Nutrition Facts Table

Use the % Daily Value tool on the nutrition facts table to help you choose foods lower in sodium. Remember the serving size at the top of the table is what the information is based on.

- Foods with a 15% Daily Value or higher are high in sodium.
- Choose food with 5% Daily Value or lower when possible.

Aim to eat **LESS THAN 2000mg OF SODIUM PER DAY**. This is less than **1 TEASPOON OF SALT**.



5 Quick Tips to Eat Less Salt

1. Don't add salt to your food when you are cooking or when you sit down at the table. Instead flavour your food with spices, herbs, lemon, garlic, and onion.
2. Eat less processed, packaged, or prepared foods by having homemade meals made with fresh unprocessed ingredients whenever possible.
3. Limit pickled foods, olives, and jarred dips such as salsa and chutney.
4. Limit the amount of condiments you use such as ketchup, soy sauce, and salad dressing as these can be very high in sodium.
5. Read food labels and choose foods that have less sodium per serving.

If you have a kidney condition talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or dietitian before using a salt substitute. Some contain potassium, which may be a problem if you have kidney disease or other health problems.