# SODIUM REDUCTION TOOLKIT

## FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTINGS

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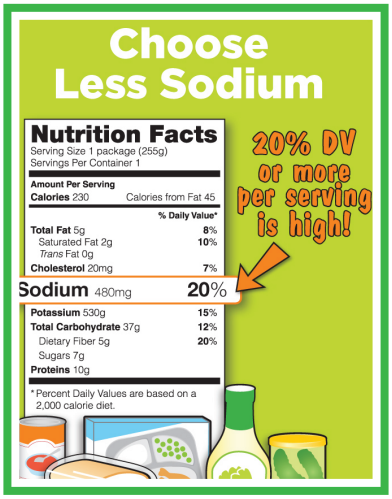
About 90% of children in the United States consume more sodium than recommended in the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

**Although some sodium is needed, too much sodium may cause high blood pressure, kidney disease, and other problems in some people. Processed foods have sodium added and are the major source of sodium in our diets. Sodium is also naturally occurring in milk, meats, grains and other unprocessed foods.**

When young children are fed highly salted foods, they learn to expect a salty taste in all foods. It is better to allow children to develop a taste for the natural flavor of foods. Since added table salt provides no nutritional benefit, it is a good policy to avoid adding salt to foods served to young children.





## BACKGROUND

From 2013-2016, Family Development Services, the sole provider of Head Start services for Marion County in Indianapolis Indiana, participated in a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funded initiative entitled, Sodium Reduction in Communities Program. This document summarizes the Marion County Head Start's experiences and outcomes achieved and provides tools, suggestions, and resources for implementing similar healthy nutrition strategies in early child care settings. The Marion County Head Start program serves nearly 2,000 low-income families who have less access to healthy foods. Since children served by the program eat at least a third of their meals at Head Start, reducing sodium in those meals can make a big difference. By making a few simple changes, the Marion County Head Start program was able to lower how much sodium preschool children ate by over 35% – and you can, too!

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### HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SMALL CHANGES THAT RESULTED IN A LARGE SODIUM REDUCTION:

**CONDIMENTS**

Lower sodium salad dressings were served with nine different meals and lowered sodium by a total of 682 mg over those nine meals.

**ENTRÉES**

The breaded chicken patty was replaced with an un-breaded chicken breast (160 mg decrease). The Cheeseburger Pasta meal was replaced with a Beefy Mac and Cheese meal (305 mg decrease). The shredded BBQ beef was switched with a shredded BBQ chicken (650 mg decrease). The fried chicken nuggets were swapped with baked chicken tenders and a black bean and corn fiesta salad (722 mg decrease). The turkey meatballs in gravy were replaced with chicken enchiladas (394 mg decrease) which also provided more cultural variety.

**GRAINS**

The garlic bread was replaced with a whole grain breadstick in the spaghetti meal (20 mg decrease); and a corn muffin was replaced with whole wheat bread (85 mg decrease). A lower sodium tortilla was identified and purchased resulting in a 110 mg decrease. This was a big win for Marion County Head Start because the tortilla was used for several meals including tacos and wraps.

**VEGETABLES**

Canned vegetables were substituted with fresh or frozen products. The canned green beans were swapped with frozen (95 mg decrease). The mashed potatoes served with the meatloaf meal were replaced with orange glazed carrots (213 mg decrease) and mashed potatoes served with turkey meatballs were replaced with a spinach salad (335 mg decrease). Not only was the sodium reduced in these meals, but the bright vegetables that were added provided more color, variety, and nutrition to the children's plate.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE MARION COUNTY HEAD START PROJECT, CHECK OUT THIS LINK:**
**HTTP://WWW.CDC.GOV/SALT/PDFS/SUCCESSSTORY-INDIANAPOLIS.PDF**

# SODIUM REDUCTION TOOLKIT

## FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTINGS

## NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

### STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS • GETTING STARTED

1. Review the menu for nutritional content, including sodium. Look at the Nutrition Facts label for each menu item.
2. Identify high sodium foods (biggest offenders). http://www.cdc.gov/salt/sources.htm
3. Fill out the Sodium Comparison Worksheet (Appendix A).
4. Identify lower sodium substitutions.
5. Sample lower sodium products for acceptability (consider holding taste tests of new products with students and staff).
6. Set goals for gradual sodium reduction.


## PURCHASING FOODS

- Check the Nutrition Facts labels and ingredients lists to find packaged foods lower in sodium. Choose the foods with lower numbers, and with "salt" listed further down the ingredient list.
- Pick fresh foods. Fresh foods are lower in sodium, compared to processed foods. Use fresh or frozen vegetables instead of canned versions and skip cooking with added salt. Use fresh beef, pork, poultry or seafood instead of those with salt added.
- Pick less-processed foods. They are lower in sodium, compared to more-processed foods. Use baked chicken tenders instead of fried chicken nuggets.
- Be careful of condiments. Switch regular salad dressings for lower sodium versions, especially ranch for dipping. Choose low sodium ketchup, bbq, and soy sauce.
- Buy child friendly portions. Look for smaller whole grain buns and tortillas for sandwiches and wraps.

**WARNING**

**Look at all nutrients to make sure fat and sugar have not been added to replace the sodium.**

## IN THE KITCHEN

- Replace salt in recipes with fresh or dried herbs, lemon juice, and/or vinegar.
- Drain and rinse canned precooked beans and vegetables.
- Remove or replace gravies with a watered down low sodium broth.
- Do not add salt to water when cooking pasta and noodles.
- Replace high sodium side items with raw vegetables. For example, replace mashed potatoes with gravy with fresh zucchini slices or spaghetti squash.
- Do not add cheese to burgers or sandwiches.

## IN THE CLASSROOM

- Model healthy eating for the children in your care.
- Enthusiastically try all the foods on your plate.
- Remember ALL meal components are important for a healthy mind and body.
- Eat the healthy foods that are served and try new foods with a good attitude.

(See Appendix B for more information for on Nutrition and the Feeding Environment)

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

### THE CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

CACFP meals are healthy meals that are required to meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. To receive federal reimbursements, preschool meal programs must offer "reimbursable" meals that meet strict federal nutrition standards. These standards, also referred to as "the meal pattern," require preschools to offer students the right balance of fruits, vegetables, low-fat or fat-free milk, whole grains and lean protein with every meal. — For more information on the CACFP nutrition standards and meal pattern check this resource from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). | **http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks**

### NUTRITION STANDARDS

Establishing program specific nutrition standards as policy can ensure the sustainability of the healthy changes made by your program. Nutrition standards may vary depending on the setting. A preschool may require different nutrition standards than an afterschool program, or even a Head Start. For an example of the Family Development Services Nutrition Standards, see Appendix C. For more information on how to create a food procurement policy and develop nutrition standards check out this resource from the CDC.
**https://www.cdc.gov/salt/pdfs/dhdsp_procurement_guide.pdf**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Improving the Food Environment Through Nutrition Standards: A Guide for Government Procurement. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. February 2011. | **Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

**APPENDIX**



# SODIUM REDUCTION WORKSHEET

## Sodium Comparison Worksheet

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Review Nutrition Facts Label of current foods served for sodium content.
2. Enter or write down Product Name, Serving Size, and Sodium Content.
3. Review Nutrition Facts Label of new food products for sodium content.
4. Enter or write down Date of product change, New Product Name, Serving Size, and Sodium Content.
5. Subtract column B from Column A to find Change in Sodium (A - B = Change in Sodium).

**KEY:**
LS = Low Sodium
WG = Whole Grain
mg = milligram
oz = ounce
Tbls = Tablespoon

| | | | | A | | | | | B | | (A - B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Product Category** | | ***Date*** | **Product Name** | **Serving Size** | **Original Product Sodium per Serving (mg)** | | ***Date*** | **New Product Name** | **Serving Size** | **New Product Sodium per Serving (mg)** | | **Change in Sodium per Serving (mg)** |
| **Bread & Grains** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | *EXAMPLE:Sandwich Bread* | *1 slice (1 oz)* | *90* | | | *WG Sandwich Bread* | *1 slice (1 oz)* | *75* | | *15* |
| | | | *EXAMPLE: Bread Stick* | *1.75 oz.* | *220* | | | *WG Bread Stick* | *1.5 oz.* | *175* | | *45* |
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| **Cheese Products** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | *EXAMPLE: Cheddar Cheese* | *1 slice (1 oz)* | *340* | | | *Cheddar Cheese* | *1/2 slice (0.5 oz)* | *170* | | *170* |
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Product Category** | | ***Date*** | **Product Name** | **Serving Size** | **Original Product Sodium per Serving (mg)** | | ***Date*** | **New Product Name** | **Serving Size** | **New Product Sodium per Serving (mg)** | **Change in Sodium per Serving (mg)** |
| **Salad Dressings** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **& Condiments** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | *EXAMPLE: Ranch Salad Dressing* | *1 Tbls (12 gm)* | *130* | | | *Low Sodium Ranch* | *1 Tbls (12 gm)* | *55* | *75* |
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| **Tomato Products** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | *EXAMPLE: Tomato Sauce* | 1/4 cup | 410 | | | *LS Tomato Sauce* | 1/4 cup | 320 | *90* |
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| **Soups &** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Soup Bases** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | *EXAMPLE: Chicken Stock* | 1 cup | 800 | | | LS Chicken Stock | 1 cup | 320 | | *480* |
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| **Gravies &** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Dry Mixes** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | *EXAMPLE: Turkey Gravy* | *7 gm (dry)* | *240* | | | *LS Brown Gravy* | *7 gm (dry)* | *140* | | *100* |
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| **Meat, Poultry** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **& Entrée's** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | *EXAMPLE: Breaded Chicken Patty* | *3 oz* | *480* | | | *Baked Chicken Breast* | *3 oz* | *320* | | *160* |
| | | | *EXAMPLE: Hamburger Patty* | *3 oz* | *400* | | | *LS Hamburger Patty* | *2.5 oz* | *280* | | *120* |
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| **Vegetables** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | *EXAMPLE: Canned Green Beans* | *1/4 cup* | *200* | | | *Frozen Green Beans* | *1/4 cup* | *25* | | *175* |
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## WHAT'S A FEEDING ENVIRONMENT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**In addition to the foods on the table, the atmosphere in which children eat their meals affects their life-long eating habits. A supportive nutrition environment is important for nurturing healthy eating habits in young children.**

**The feeding environment includes the interaction between adults and children at meal and snack time. Adults set the feeding environment for children through their attitudes and actions.**

### STAFF CAN SET A POSITIVE FEEDING ENVIRONMENT BY:

- Eating the healthy foods that are served and trying new foods with a good attitude.
- Not bringing unhealthy foods and drinks into the classroom.
- Helping children pay attention to when they are hungry and when they are full so children can learn to eat the amount their bodies need.
- It is the caregiver's job to buy, prepare and serve healthy meals and snacks. It is the child's job to decide how much (if any) and what to eat of the foods served. If this division of responsibility is respected, children will learn to try new foods, respect their fullness cues, and maintain lifelong healthy eating habits. It is important to remember that children will not starve. They will choose to eat when they need to. Avoid turning mealtime into a power struggle.

**Eating nutritious foods and learning good mealtime behaviors are important due to the rapid growth and the major developmental changes children undergo especially in early childhood. It is important to send children consistent messages about eating and good nutrition. For example, if teachers teach lessons that encourage fresh fruits and vegetables, it is important to serve them fresh fruits and vegetables at meals so they will really get the message.**

**Mealtime can also be an opportunity for learning and developing social and motor skills and for introducing new foods. Skills such as hand washing, table manners, and carrying on a conversation can be developed and reinforced at mealtime.**

## MARION COUNTY HEAD START NUTRITION STANDARDS

This document outlines nutrition standards for food purchased by Family Development Services to prepare meals for Marion County Head Start children. These standards are based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture 2015 Dietary Guidelines and reflect current nutrition science and national health recommendations and promotes whole or minimally processed, nutrient-rich foods that are low in fat, added sugars, and sodium. Our goal is to enhance the health of families and children served by Family Development Services and the Marion County Head Start program by increasing their access to more nutritious foods and beverages. Food vendors, distributors, and manufacturers doing business with Family Development Services and Marion County Head Start are expected to meet the Marion County Head Start Nutrition Standards for purchased food as a condition of partnership. The Marion County Head Start Nutrition Standards must be reviewed and updated by the Nutrition and Wellness Dietitian within six months of each update of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

### HEAD START NUTRITION STANDARDS FOR PURCHASED FOOD
NUTRIENT GUIDELINES PER SERVING FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5 YEARS:

| CALORIE LIMITS | SODIUM LIMITS | FAT LIMITS | SUGAR LIMITS |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Snack and Side Items: Less than 200 calories<br>• Entrée Items: Less than 350 calories | • Snack and Side Items: Less than 200 milligrams<br>• Entrée Items: Less than 480 milligrams | • Total Fat: Less than 35% of calories<br>• Saturated Fat: Less than 10% of calories<br>• Trans Fat: Zero grams | • Less than 35% of weight from total sugars in food |

TO CALCULATE NUTRIENT COMPONENTS VISIT: HTTP://FOODPLANNER.HEALTHIERGENERATION.ORG/CALCULATOR/

IN ADDITION TO THE NUTRIENT GUIDELINES PER SERVING FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5 YEARS:

### CALORIE LIMITS

- Products must be 100-percent whole grain or contain a blend of whole-grain meal and/or flour and enriched meal and/or flour of which at least 50-percent is whole grain
- Cereal, cereal bars, and granola bars must contain less than 6 grams of sugar

### DAIRY PRODUCTS • FOR CHILDREN 3-5 YEARS

- Milk will be fat-free or 1% fat and unflavored
  NOTE: Children under 24 months are required to be served whole milk
- Yogurt will be fat-free or 1% fat
- Cheese will be low-fat or reduced fat natural cheese

### MEAT & MEAT ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTS

- Due to religious restrictions and food allergy concerns; fish, pork, and peanut products are prohibited at Marion County Head Start
- Preferences for unprocessed or minimally processed products that do not contain added ingredients, such as fat, sugars, or sodium

# MARION COUNTY HEAD START NUTRITION STANDARDS

## HEAD START NUTRITION STANDARDS FOR PURCHASED FOOD
## NUTRIENT GUIDELINES PER SERVING:

### VEGETABLE AND FRUIT PRODUCTS

- Must be whole vegetables and fruit, including fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables that are unprocessed or minimally processed and do not contain added ingredients, such as fat, sugars, or sodium
- Preference for seasonal, fresh vegetables and fruits, over frozen or canned
- Canned vegetable must be labled as reduced sodium or low sodium
- Canned fruits must be in water or 100% juice
- All juice must be 100% juice with no added sweeteners

### CONDIMENTS, DRESSINGS, GRAVIES & SAUCES

- Gravies and sauces must be a low-fat or fat-free, low-sugar, and/or low-sodium variety
- Condiments and dressings must be no more than a 12g (1 Tablespoon) portion and contain no more than 90 milligrams of sodium

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# GET THE FACTS:
## Sources of Sodium in Your Diet

All across the United States, high sodium intake is a major problem. On average, American adults eat more than 3,400 milligrams (mg) of sodium each day, which is significantly higher than the recommended limit. The *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend that Americans consume less than 2,300 mg of sodium each day as part of a healthy eating pattern.

The vast majority of U.S. adults eat more sodium than they need. Having accurate information about where dietary salt comes from can help Americans stick to the recommendations.

### The Salt Shaker Is Not to Blame

- More than 75% of the sodium Americans eat comes from restaurant, prepackaged, and processed foods.
- Only 5% of dietary sodium is added during home cooking and only 6% is added at the table.
- The remaining 12% of dietary sodium occurs naturally in foods.

### Surprising Sources of Sodium

- Lots of packaged and processed foods can have high levels of sodium, and they may not even taste salty to many consumers.
- Breads and rolls, cold cuts/cured meats, and pizza are top contributors of sodium in the American diet.
- For example, one slice of bread can contain anywhere from 80 to 230 mg of sodium.
- Lunch meats are a major source—1 serving, around 6 thin slices, typically can contain 750 mg or more of sodium.

| Food | Sodium Range (in milligrams) |
|---|---|
| 1 slice white bread | 80 - 230 |
| 3 oz turkey breast, deli or pre-packaged luncheon meat | 450 - 1,050 |
| 4 oz slice frozen pizza, plain cheese, regular crust | 370 - 730 |
| 4 oz slice restaurant pizza, plain cheese, regular crust | 510 - 760 |
| 4 oz boneless, skinless chicken breast, fresh | 40 - 330 |
| 3 oz chicken strips, restaurant, breaded | 430 - 900 |
| 3 oz chicken nuggets, frozen, breaded | 200 - 570 |
| 1 cup chicken noodle soup, canned prepared | 100 - 940 |
| 1 corn dog, regular | 350 - 620 |
| 1 cheeseburger, fast food restaurant | 710 - 1,690 |
| 1 oz slice American cheese, processed (packaged or deli) | 330 - 460 |
| 1 cup canned pasta with meat sauce | 530 - 980 |
| 5 oz pork with barbecue sauce (packaged) | 600 - 1,120 |
| 1 oz potato chips, plain | 50 - 200 |


**Sodium levels of the same food can vary widely, so choose wisely.**

# GET THE FACTS:
## Sources of Sodium in Your Diet

### Keeping an Eye on Labels as You Shop Is Important

- Frozen pizza typically contains between 370 and 730 mg of sodium in just 1 slice.
- Soup can also be high in sodium. For example, tomato soup can range from 700 to 1,260 mg of sodium in 8 ounces (1 cup).
- Many seemingly healthy foods, such as canned vegetables, often contain added sodium.
- Raw chicken and other meats can have sodium and flavor solutions added.
- Even foods labeled as "less sodium" or "reduced sodium" can contain significant amounts. One tablespoon of "less sodium" soy sauce typically contains more than 500 mg, and consumers often eat more than 1 serving at a time.

### Why Cut Back? And How?

Eating too much sodium can lead to increased blood pressure, which can raise your risk for heart attack, stroke, and other cardiovascular conditions. Reducing sodium intake can help lower these risks. To help protect your heart, make a commitment to:

- **Try to eat more fruits and vegetables.** For canned and frozen vegetables, look for no salt added or low sodium versions, or choose frozen varieties without sauce.
- **Check nutrition labels on packaged foods.** Compare sodium in different brands for products like processed soups, dressings/sauces, breads, and frozen meals, and choose those with lower sodium.
- **Eat at home more frequently, and prepare more meals from scratch.** To boost flavor, use salt free herbs and spices rather than processed sauces, packaged broths, or condiments.
- **Ask restaurants not to add salt to your meal,** and use condiments in small amounts. Also ask your favorite restaurants, stores, and food manufacturers to offer more low-sodium options.
- **Re-train your taste buds.** Over time, the less sodium you eat, the less you'll want.

**Learn more at www.cdc.gov/salt**

### CHOOSE FRESH OR LOW SODIUM FOODS

**FRESH TOMATOES**

6 mg (whole)

**NO SALT ADDED CANNED TOMATOES**


20 mg (per ½ cup)

**CANNED TOMATOES**


220 mg (per ½ cup)

For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30333
Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/TTY: 1-888-232-6348
E-mail: cdcinfo@cdc.gov • Web: www.cdc.gov
Publication date: 04/2016

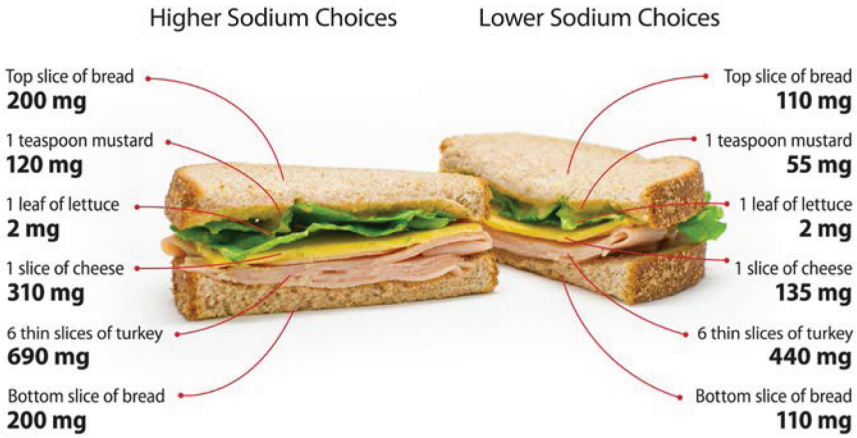
# GET THE FACTS:
## Sodium Reduction Tips

## Tips for Reducing Sodium

- Buy fresh, frozen (no sauce), or no-salt-added canned vegetables.
- Use fresh poultry,* fish, pork,* and lean meat, rather than canned or processed meats.
- When available, buy low-sodium, lower-sodium, reduced-sodium, or no-salt-added versions of products.
- Limit sauces, mixes, and "instant" products, including flavored rice and ready-made pasta.
- Compare Nutrition Facts labels on food packages for percent Daily Value or amount of sodium in milligrams.

* Check to see if saline or salt solution has been added—if so, choose another brand.

## Choose wisely—sodium content can vary within food categories




**Total = 1,522 mg**
**per whole sandwich**

**Total = 852 mg**
**per whole sandwich**

## Which of These Sauces Is Lower in Sodium?


The majority of sodium in our diets is from packaged food and is a direct result of food processing. Even foods that may not taste salty can be substantial sources of sodium.

**Check the amount of sodium per serving, and don't forget to check the number of servings per container!**

Remember, the *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend that Americans consume less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium each day as part of a healthy eating pattern. Learn more at www.cdc.gov/salt.


For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30333
Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/TTY: 1-888-232-6348
E-mail: cdcinfo@cdc.gov • Web: www.cdc.gov


Publication date: 04/2016

# Shocking Salt-tistics

| Food group | Range of sodium per serving |
|---|---|
| Tomato soup | 700–1,260 mg |
| Frozen pizza, plain, cheese | 450–1,200 mg |
| Pretzels, regular flavor, salted | 290–560 mg |
| Salad dressing, regular fat, all types | 110–505 mg |
| Breads, all types | 95–210 mg |
| Frozen vegetables, all types | 2–160 mg |

## Hidden sources of salt

Salt is hidden in foods you might not expect to be salty. And the salt content of similar items can vary widely. Read nutrition and menu labels to compare sodium levels. (Sodium, which is listed on the Nutrition Facts panel, is the component of salt that raises blood pressure.)

Source: Agricultural Research Service Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17, and recent manufacturers' label data from retail market surveys. Pizza and bread slices vary in size and weight across brands.

Note: None of the examples provided were labeled low-sodium products.

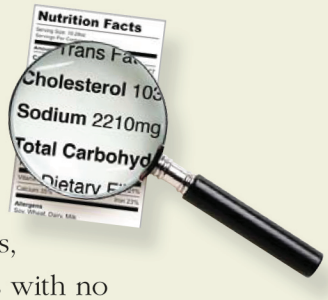
## Did you know?

- Eating too much salt increases blood pressure.
- Most of the salt in your diet comes from foods that might not even taste salty, such as breads, meats, and dairy products.
- The salt shaker is not the main issue—almost 80% of salt is already in the food you buy, particularly in processed and restaurant foods.

## What can you do?

Small changes can make a big difference in how much salt you eat. Here are practical steps you and your family can take to reduce your salt intake:

- Know your recommended limit for daily sodium intake. Most Americans should consume no more than 1,500 milligrams per day.
- Choose fresh fruits and vegetables and products labeled as "low sodium" or "no salt added."
- Read the Nutrition Facts panel on the foods you buy, and choose products that are low in sodium.





- At restaurants, ask for foods with no or low salt.
- Talk to your school, worksite, local grocer, and favorite restaurants about providing more lower-sodium options.

### Resources

- CDC Salt Web Site: http://www.cdc.gov/salt
- CDC High Blood Pressure Web Site: http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Heart Healthy Cookbook: http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/healthyeating

# FOOD FACTS

From the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

# Sodium in Your Diet

## *Use the Nutrition Facts Label and Reduce Your Intake*


You've probably heard that most Americans eat too much sodium, and too much sodium can raise blood pressure – which can have serious health consequences if not treated.

Despite what many people think, use of the salt shaker is *not* the main cause of too much sodium in your diet. In fact, about 75% of dietary sodium comes from eating **packaged and restaurant foods**, whereas only a small portion (11%) comes from salt added to food when cooking or eating. But, even though sodium is already *in* these foods when you purchase them, there are still some steps you *can* follow to lower your daily sodium intake.

## Look at the Label!

Packaged foods and beverages can contain high levels of sodium, whether or not they *taste* salty. That's why it's important to use the Nutrition Facts Label to check the sodium content.

- **Understand the Daily Value.** The Daily Values are the amounts of nutrients recommended per day for Americans 4 years of age and older. The Daily Value for sodium is **less than 2,400 milligrams (mg) per day**.
- **Use the Percent Daily Value (%DV) as a tool.** The %DV tells you how much of a nutrient is in **one serving** of a food. The %DV is based on 100% of the Daily Value for sodium. When comparing and choosing foods, pick the food with a lower %DV of sodium. As a general rule:

  5% DV or less of sodium per serving is low
  20% DV or more of sodium per serving is high

- **Pay attention to serving sizes.** The %DV listed is for **one serving**, but one package may contain more than one serving. Be sure to look at the serving size to determine how many servings you are actually consuming. For example, if a package contains *two servings* and you eat the entire package, you are consuming *twice the amount* of sodium listed on the label.

NOTE: FDA has issued final changes to update the Nutrition Facts label for packaged foods. For more information, see Changes to the Nutrition Facts Label at **http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm385663.htm**.

## Food Choices Matter!

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost half of the sodium consumed by Americans comes from the following foods, many of which are commercially processed or prepared:

- Breads and rolls
- Cheese (natural and processed)
- Cold cuts and cured meats (such as deli or packaged ham or turkey)
- Mixed meat dishes (such as beef stew, chili, and meat loaf)
- Mixed pasta dishes (such as lasagna, pasta salad, and spaghetti with meat sauce)
- Pizza
- Poultry (fresh and processed)
- Sandwiches (such as hamburgers, hot dogs, and submarine sandwiches)
- Savory snacks (such as chips, crackers, popcorn, and pretzels)
- Soups

But remember, the sodium content can vary significantly between similar types of foods. So, use the Nutrition Facts Label to compare the amount of sodium in different foods and beverages, and select products that are lower in sodium. And, don't forget to check the serving size when comparing products in order to make an accurate comparison.

### Salt and Sodium: Defined

The words "salt" and "sodium" are often used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing. Salt (also known by its chemical name, *sodium chloride*) is a crystal-like compound that is abundant in nature and is used to flavor and preserve food. Sodium is a mineral, and one of the *chemical elements* found in salt.

## Sodium as a Food Ingredient

As a food ingredient, sodium has multiple uses, such as for curing meat, baking, thickening, retaining moisture, enhancing flavor (including the flavor of other ingredients), and as a preservative. Some common food additives – like monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium bicarbonate (baking soda), sodium nitrite, and sodium benzoate – also contain sodium and contribute (in lesser amounts) to the total amount of "sodium" listed on the Nutrition Facts Label.

Surprisingly, some foods that don't taste salty can still be high in sodium, which is why using taste alone is not an accurate way to judge a food's sodium content. For example, while some foods that are high in sodium (like pickles and soy sauce) *taste* salty, there are also many foods (like cereals and pastries) that contain sodium but *don't* taste salty. Also, some foods that you may eat several times a day (such as breads) can add up to a lot of sodium over the course of a day, even though an individual serving may not be high in sodium.

## Check the Package for Nutrient Claims

You can also check for nutrient claims on food and beverage packages to quickly identify those that may contain less sodium. Here's a guide to common claims and what they mean:

| What It Says | What It Means |
|---|---|
| Salt/Sodium-Free | Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving |
| Very Low Sodium | 35 mg of sodium or less per serving |
| Low Sodium | 140 mg of sodium or less per serving |
| Reduced Sodium | At least 25% less sodium than the regular product |
| Light in Sodium or Lightly Salted | At least 50% less sodium than the regular product |
| No-Salt-Added or Unsalted | No salt is added during processing – but these products may not be salt/sodium-free unless stated |

## Sodium and Blood Pressure

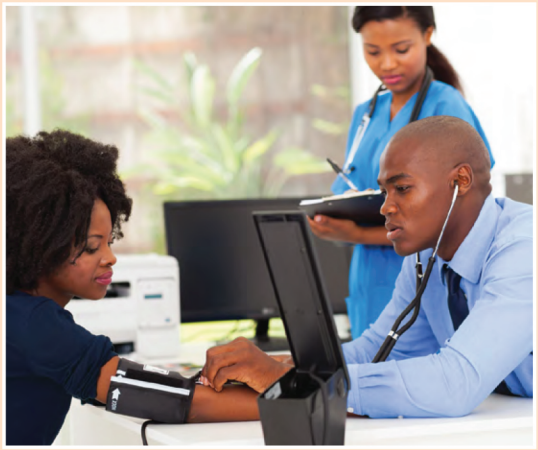
Sodium attracts water, and a high-sodium diet draws water into the bloodstream, which can increase the volume of blood and subsequently your blood pressure. **High blood pressure** (also known as **hypertension**) is a condition in which blood pressure remains elevated over time. Hypertension makes the heart work harder, and the high force of the blood flow can harm arteries and organs (such as the heart, kidneys, brain, and eyes).

And since blood pressure normally rises with age, limiting your sodium intake becomes even more important each year. The good news is that eating less sodium can help lower blood pressure, which in turn, can help reduce your risk of developing these serious medical conditions.

### Potassium Helps!

Did you know that sodium and potassium both affect blood pressure? Eating enough potassium each day can help lower blood pressure by balancing out some of the harmful effects that sodium can have on blood pressure. Look for foods rich in potassium, such as bananas, beet greens, juices (carrot, orange, pomegranate, and prune), yogurt (non-fat and low-fat), potatoes, spinach, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and tomato products, and white beans.

Note: Food manufacturers may *voluntarily* list the Percent Daily Value (%DV) of potassium per serving on the Nutrition Facts Label, but they are *required to* list potassium if a statement is made on the package labeling about its health effects or the amount contained in the food (for example, “high” or “low”).



## Health Facts

- Approximately 56% of adults in the U.S. (ages 18 years and older) have either hypertension or prehypertension (blood pressure that is higher than normal, but not high enough to be defined as hypertension).
- Approximately 10% of children in the U.S. (ages 8 to 17 years old) have either hypertension or prehypertension.
- Hypertension can lead to heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness.

## Know Your Numbers

Sodium is an essential nutrient and is needed by the body in relatively *small amounts* (provided that substantial sweating does not occur) to maintain a balance of body fluids and keep muscles and nerves running smoothly. However, most Americans eat too much of it – and they may not even know it.

Americans eat on average over **3,400 mg of sodium per day**, with intakes generally higher for men than women. However, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends that adults and children ages 14 years and older limit sodium intake to **less than 2,300 mg per day** – that’s equal to about **1 teaspoon of salt**!


Adults with hypertension and prehypertension should further reduce their sodium intake to **1,500 mg per day**, which can result in even greater blood pressure reduction. So, talk to your healthcare provider about whether *you* are at risk for high blood pressure, and use the Nutrition Facts Label as your tool to evaluate how much sodium you are eating and drinking. In addition, adults who would benefit from blood pressure lowering should combine lower sodium intake with the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan (see **http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dash**).

# 10 Easy Tips For Reducing Sodium Consumption

Learning about sodium in foods and exploring new ways to prepare foods can help you achieve your sodium goal. And, if you follow these tips to reduce the amount of sodium you consume, your "taste" for sodium will gradually decrease over time – so eventually, you may not even miss it!

1. **Read the Nutrition Facts Label**

   Read the Nutrition Facts Label to see how much sodium is in foods and beverages. Most people should consume less than 100% of the Daily Value (or less than 2,400 mg) of sodium each day. Check the label to compare sodium in different brands of foods and beverages and choose those lower in sodium.

2. **Prepare your own food when you can**

   Limit packaged sauces, mixes, and "instant" products (including flavored rice, instant noodles, and ready-made pasta).

3. **Add flavor without adding sodium**

   Limit the amount of salt you add to foods when cooking, baking, or at the table. Try no-salt seasoning blends and herbs and spices instead of salt to add flavor to your food.

4. **Buy fresh**

   Choose fresh meat, poultry, and seafood, rather than processed varieties. Also, check the package on fresh meat and poultry to see if salt water or saline has been added.

5. **Watch your veggies**

   Buy fresh, frozen (no sauce or seasoning), or low sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables.

6. **Give sodium the "rinse"**

   Rinse sodium-containing canned foods, such as beans, tuna, and vegetables before eating. This removes some of the sodium.

7. **"Unsalt" your snacks**

   Choose low sodium or no-salt-added nuts, seeds, and snack products (such as chips and pretzels) – or have carrot or celery sticks instead.

8. **Consider your condiments**

   Sodium in condiments can add up. Choose light or reduced sodium condiments, add oil and vinegar to salads rather than bottled dressings, and use only a small amount of seasoning from flavoring packets instead of the entire packet.

9. **Reduce your portion size**

   Less food means less sodium. Prepare smaller portions at home and consume less when eating out — choose smaller sizes, split an entrée with a friend, or take home part of your meal.

10. **Make lower-sodium choices at restaurants**

    Ask for your meal to be prepared without salt and request that sauces and salad dressings be served "on the side," then use less of them. If a restaurant item or meal includes a claim about its nutrient content, such as "low sodium" or "low fat," then nutrition information to support that claim is required to be available at the point of purchase.

    In addition, as of May 5, 2017, many chain restaurants (and other places selling restaurant-type food) will be required to provide written information on the nutrient content of standard menu items, including the amount of sodium. In the meantime you can also ask to see nutrition information (available in many chain restaurants) and then choose options that are lower in sodium.



For more information, contact the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition's Food and Cosmetic Information Center at **1-888-SAFEFOOD** (toll free), Monday through Friday 10 AM to 4 PM ET (except Thursdays from 12:30 PM to 1:30 PM ET and Federal holidays). Or, visit the FDA website at **http://www.fda.gov/educationresourcelibrary**

# SODIUM REDUCTION TOOLKIT

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