

Getting Started with Eating Less Salt

Salt contains sodium. Your body needs small amounts of sodium to work properly. Most people in Canada eat almost 2 times the sodium 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. Sodium also comes from the salt we add at the table or in cooking.

Eating less sodium can lower your blood pressure. Healthy blood pressure helps lower your risk of heart disease, heart failure, stroke, and kidney disease.

How much sodium do you 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 tips in this handout to help you eat less sodium.

Eating less salt and sodium

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

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.

1 tsp (5 mL) of salt = 2300 mg sodium

Salt substitutes: Some have potassium, which is a problem if you have kidney disease or other health conditions. Ask your healthcare provider before using a salt substitute.

Read food labels

Reading food labels can help you choose lower sodium foods.

On the Nutrition Facts table

- Check the % Daily Value. 5% Daily Value or less is a little sodium. 15% Daily Value or more is a lot.
- Compare brands. Choose foods with a lower % Daily Value for sodium.

Nutrition Facts	
Per ¼ cup (175 g)	
Calories 160	% Daily Value*
Fat 2.5 g	3 %
Saturated 1.5 g	8 %
+Trans 0 g	
Carbohydrate 25 g	
Fibre 3 g	11 %
Sugars 15 g	15 %
Protein 8 g	
Cholesterol 10 mg	
Sodium 75 mg	3 %

Low sodium label claims

- Look for foods labelled as “sodium-free”, “low sodium”, or “no salt added”.
- Reduced sodium does not always mean the food is low in sodium.
- Always check the Nutrition Facts table for the amount of sodium in a product.

Try to limit or avoid these high sodium foods:

Vegetables and Fruits

- Canned vegetables with added salt
- French fries, instant potato mixes
- Tomato sauces with added salt
- Vegetable juices with added salt

Grain Foods

- Canned pasta products
- Instant hot cereals
- Instant noodle mixes
- Seasoned rice, pasta, or stuffing mixes

Protein Foods

- Blue cheese, Feta cheese, or Parmesan cheese
- Canned meat or fish
- Cottage cheese
- Cured and processed meats such as ham, bacon, sausages, pepperoni, hot dogs, or smokies
- Plant-based burgers, sausages, deli meats, or breaded nuggets
- Processed cheese slices or cheese spreads
- Salted nuts

Other high sodium foods

- Bouillon cubes or soup broth mixes
- Canned or dried soups
- Condiments such as mustard, ketchup, BBQ sauce, chutney, or salsa
- Fast food or pizza
- Pickles, olives, kimchi, or sauerkraut
- Prepared sauces or sauce mixes
- Salt or sea salt
- Sauces like soy, teriyaki, hoisin, or fish sauce
- Seasoning mixes that have salt added, such as garlic salt, onion salt, or celery salt
- Salted chips, nachos, pretzels, popcorn, or crackers

Getting used to low sodium eating

When you start cutting back on sodium and salty foods 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, some foods will taste too salty.

For more information on flavouring food without salt, visit www.ahs.ca/nutritionhandouts and search "Cooking without salt"

More support



- [Health Link](#) has dietitians to answer nutrition questions.
- Call 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on ahs.ca/811.
- Call, text, or chat with 211 Alberta (<https://ab.211.ca/>) to find out about financial benefits, programs, and services.