

Healthy Eating: Reducing salt intake. High Blood Pressure & Diabetes



Healthy eating plays an important role in managing hypertension (high blood pressure). Choose a variety of foods and include more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. It is also important to watch the salt in foods which is mainly composed of sodium.

Foods naturally contain small amounts of sodium, but most of the sodium in our diet is added during food processing. Canned and packaged foods are high in sodium because it is added to maintain safety and freshness. Sodium intake should be no more than 1,500 to 2,300 mg per day. 2300 mg of sodium is equal to 1 teaspoon of salt.

Reading Food Labels

Other terms for sodium (or salt) to watch for on a label are:

- Celery, garlic or onion salt
- Monosodium glutamate (Accent or MSG)
- Sodium (Sodium Benzoate, Sodium Citrate, Sodium Nitrate)
- Baking soda
- Baking powder
- Brine for pickling
- Soy sauce
- Na (an abbreviation for sodium)

Ingredients are listed in order from most to least. This means the ingredient used in the greatest amount is listed first. Therefore, if sodium or salt appears near the top of the ingredient list, avoid that product. Also, certain medications or drugs such as laxatives, antacids and effervescent salts may contain sodium. Always consult your physician or pharmacist before using any drugs.



How to cut down salt intake

- Eliminate high salt foods
- Stop using salt at the table
- Limit salt used in cooking

The following table can help you make healthier and lower sodium choices from each food group. Choose Lower Sodium Foods more often.

Food Group	Lower Sodium Foods	Higher Sodium Foods
Grains and Starches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grains and higher fibre foods such as: breads, pasta, cereals, bulk hot cereals • Grains with no added salt such as unsalted crackers homemade muffins, pancakes, corn breads (made from scratch) • Homemade soups (can be frozen for later use), or soups that are low sodium or have no added salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packaged foods with added salt such as: crackers, croutons, seasoned pasta and rice dishes, stuffing, instant hot cereals, instant pancake/waffle mixes • Canned products such as: corn, soups • Prepared convenience foods such as: Frozen pizzas, Frozen dinners
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh or frozen fruits • Fruits with their skin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruits processed with salt
Milk and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low fat dairy products such as skim or 1% milk and yogurt or soymilk • Buttermilk limited to less than 1 cup per week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malted milk, milkshakes • Some chocolate flavoured mixes • Canned milk

Food Group	Lower Sodium Foods	Higher Sodium Foods
Other Choices (sweet foods and snacks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsalted snack foods like popcorn and chips • Homemade baked goods (made from scratch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snack foods like chips and popcorn • Packaged pudding, cake, pie mixes
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh or frozen vegetables with no sauces • Low sodium canned vegetables or canned vegetables rinsed with water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canned vegetables • Sauerkraut, pickled vegetables • Regular vegetable or tomato juices • Frozen vegetables with sauces • Canned tomatoes
Meat and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh or frozen lean meats and poultry. • Fresh fish or low sodium canned fish at least once a week. Rinse regular canned fish with water to flush the sodium away. • Dried beans, peas and lentils or canned beans rinsed with water • Low sodium cheeses such as ricotta, cottage cheese. These are also available as low sodium and low fat. • Unsalted nuts. Use herbs/spices to flavour nuts & seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoked, cured, canned, koshered meats • Processed meats like hotdogs, cold cuts, ham, sausage • Imitation seafood • Processed cheeses such as cheese slices, cheese sauces and spreads • Salted nuts and seeds • Canned beans and lentils • Pickled eggs
Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canola oil, olive oil, sunflower oil, vegetable oil for cooking • Non-hydrogenated margarines without added salt • Unsalted salad dressings or homemade dressings with oil, vinegar and herbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dips made with soup mixes or processed cheese • Some salad dressings • Salted butter
Extra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbs, spices, lemon and vinegar in cooking to flavour your food • Homemade herb shaker or use herb/spice blends available for purchase • Low sodium condiments • Garlic and onion powder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condiments such as ketchup, mustard, and relish • Sauces such as soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce and barbecue sauce • Pickles and olives • Herbs that contain the word salt, such as garlic salt or celery salt • Kosher salt and sea salt also contain sodium • Monosodium Glutamate • Softened water • Foods described as being smoked, pickled, teriyaki or in broth

Ways to add Zip without salt

Any of the spices in your cupboards can add new flavour to your meals. Here are some ideas to get you started

	To Add flavor to	Try
Meats	Beef	Bay leaf, chives, parsley, dry mustard powder, marjoram, thyme, oregano, pepper, garlic, onion, fresh mushrooms, sage
	Poultry	green pepper, fresh mushrooms, parsley, chives, poultry seasoning, lemon juice, paprika, sage, thyme, pepper
	Pork	applesauce, garlic, onion, pepper, cloves, dill, parsley, pepper, sage
	Fish	lemon juice, bay leaf, garlic, dill, parsley, pepper, fresh mushrooms, paprika, curry powder
Vegetables		lemon juice, marjoram, dill, parsley, onion, chives, pepper, garlic, vinegar
Salads		dry mustard mixed with vinegar and sugar, lemon juice, chives, parsley, garlic, onion, pepper, oregano
Soups		chives, onion, garlic, chili powder, oregano, thyme, bay leaf, parsley

Try this Herb Shaker Recipe

2 mL (1/4 tsp) basil

3 mL (1/2 tsp) white pepper

15 mL (1 tbsp) onion powder

15 mL (1 tbsp) garlic powder

2 mL (1/4 tsp) paprika

1 mL (1/8 tsp) rosemary

1 mL (1/8 tsp) celery seed

5 mL (1 tsp) thyme

15 mL (1 tbsp) dry mustard

Blend your ingredients and add to an empty shaker with a few pieces of raw rice to allow for easy flow.

What about Salt Substitutes?

Many salt substitutes contain potassium chloride instead of sodium chloride. Therefore, always consult your physician before taking any salt substitute.

Adapted from How to Reduce your salt intake and still like your food, Grey Bruce Health Services, January 2008

Across the country, the Canadian Diabetes Association is leading the fight against diabetes by helping people with diabetes live healthy lives while we work to find a cure. Our community-based network of supporters help us provide education and services to people living with diabetes, advocate for our cause, break ground towards a cure and translate research into practical applications.

*This document reflects the 2013 Canadian Diabetes Association Clinical Practice Guidelines. ©2013 Copyright



Related articles: *High Blood Pressure and Diabetes, Staying Healthy with Diabetes, Your Guide to Lowering Your Blood Pressure with DASH: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf*

diabetes.ca | 1-800 BANTING