



Low-sodium guidelines

Sodium is naturally found in food and is an important part of a healthy diet for the body to function properly. But too much sodium can be harmful to people with high blood pressure, kidney disease, liver disease or heart failure. According to the American Heart Association, the average person should consume less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day, and the ideal limit for most adults is 1,500 mg of sodium.¹

Sodium is usually found in packaged, canned, frozen and preserved foods. Salt from a shaker is also a source of sodium. Did you know that one teaspoon of salt contains 2,300 mg of sodium?²

General guidelines

- Avoid processed foods and instead eat more fresh foods.
- Instead of using salt while cooking and dining, season your food with fresh herbs and spices.
- Shop smart! Read nutrition labels and look for products that say “salt-free” or “low sodium.”
- Limit eating out and cook more at home. You have more control of what goes in your meal if you prepare it yourself.

How to read a food label

You can find the sodium content of food by looking at the Nutrition Facts label, which is based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Here are some terms to look out for on the front of the package:

- **Sodium free:** 5 mg or less per serving
- **Very low sodium:** 35 mg or less per serving
- **Low sodium:** 140 mg or less per serving
- **Reduced sodium:** usual sodium level reduced by 25%

This example shows a nutrition label for canned pinto beans. As you can see, it is high in sodium because the product contains more than 140 mg of sodium per serving. And that’s only if you were to have a half-cup serving. If you consumed one cup, you would be taking in 720 mg of sodium!

What if your grocery store does not contain a low-sodium or sodium-free product? Try rinsing the canned beans or vegetables in cold water with a colander for a few minutes to remove some of the sodium.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size ½ cup

Servings Per Container 3.5

Amount Per Serving	
Calories	80
Calories from Fat	10
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 1g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 360mg	15%
Total Carbohydrate 18g	6%
Dietary Fiber 8g	32%
Sugar less than 1g	
Protein 6g	
Vitamin A	0%
Vitamin C	0%
Calcium	6%
Iron	10%

Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

How to choose low-sodium items when grocery shopping³

FOOD GROUP	CHOOSE	LIMIT
Grains, breads, cereals, other grains (<i>rice, pasta, etc.</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bread with less than 140 mg of sodium per slice Cereals with less than 300 mg of sodium per serving Oats, grits or cream of wheat Plain pasta, noodles, quinoa or rice Salt-free bread crumbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bread, crackers or pretzels topped with salt Cereals with more than 300 mg of sodium per serving Biscuits, cornbread or quick breads Prepackaged bread crumbs Seasoned croutons Self-rising flours
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh and frozen vegetables (without added sauces or salt) Canned vegetables/beans (low-sodium or sodium-free versions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned vegetables/beans (high-sodium versions) Frozen vegetables with seasoning and sauces Sauerkraut and pickled vegetables
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh and canned fruit Dried fruits: raisins, cranberries or prunes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dried fruits preserved with sodium-containing additives
Dairy (<i>milk and milk products</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milk or milk powder, rice milk or soy milk Yogurt Reduced-sodium cheese Swiss cheese, ricotta cheese or fresh mozzarella Cream cheese Cottage cheese (low-sodium versions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buttermilk Processed cheese: Cheez Whiz, Velveeta or queso Cottage cheese (high-sodium versions) Feta cheese Shredded cheese has more sodium than blocked cheese Single cheese slices String cheese
Protein (<i>meat, poultry, fish or beans</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh meat and fish Deli meat (low-sodium versions) Baked ham (low-sodium versions) Bacon (low-sodium versions) Canned or packed tuna Dried beans, peas or edamame Eggs Unsalted nuts or peanut butter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cured meats: bacon, ham, sausage, pepperoni or hot dogs Deli meat (high-sodium versions) Canned meat: chili, Vienna sausage, sardines or Spam Smoked fish and meats Frozen meals with more than 500 mg of sodium per serving Salted nuts
Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsalted butter or margarine Unsaturated fats (canola, olive, corn, sunflower, safflower or peanut oil) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salted butter or margarine
Condiments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh or dried herbs Low-sodium ketchup Vinegar (balsamic or red wine) Lemon or lime juice Pepper Salt-free seasonings such as Mrs. Dash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salt, sea salt, kosher salt, onion salt or garlic salt Seasoning mixes: taco mix Bouillon cubes, Sazón Ketchup, BBQ sauce, Worcestershire sauce or soy sauce Salsa, pickles, olives or relish Salad dressings: Ranch, blue cheese, Italian or French

¹ American Heart Association website, *How Much Sodium Should I Eat per Day?* (accessed July 2017): sodiumbreakup.heart.org.

² American Heart Association website, *Shaking the Salt Habit to Lower High Blood Pressure* (accessed July 2017): heart.org.

³ Adapted from The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetic's Nutrition Care Manual Low Sodium Nutrition Therapy Client Education

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