

Cut Down on Sodium

Eating too much sodium (salt) can raise your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke. The good news is that cutting down on sodium can help lower your blood pressure and keep your heart healthy. Most people eat too much sodium and need to eat less.

Learn how to cut down on sodium – and still enjoy the foods you love.



What is sodium?

Sodium is a mineral that's found in salt. Whenever you add salt to your food, you're adding sodium. But most of the sodium we eat doesn't come from our salt shakers! Sodium is in almost all processed and prepared foods we buy, like ready-to-eat meals and restaurant meals.

There's often a lot of sodium in popular foods like:



Sandwiches, burgers, and tacos



Rice, pasta, and other grain dishes



Pizza



Soup

And a lot of the sodium in those foods comes from ingredients like:

- Processed meats, like deli meats (including turkey), sausages, and pepperoni
- Sauces and dressings
- Instant flavored foods, like flavored rice and noodles



Watch out for hidden sodium

Foods that don't taste very salty can still add a lot of sodium to your plate. For example, the sodium in bread, tortillas, cheese, and condiments can really add up.

How much sodium is too much?

We only need a small amount of sodium to stay healthy, but most people get too much. Try to stay under these limits each day:

- **Adults and teens ages 14 and older:** Aim for no more than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day
- **Children ages 9 to 13:** Aim for no more than 1,800 mg of sodium a day
- **Children ages 4 to 8:** Aim for no more than 1,500 mg of sodium a day
- **Children ages 1 to 3:** Aim for no more than 1,200 mg of sodium a day

If you have high blood pressure, you may need to limit sodium even more. Ask your doctor what amount is right for you.

And remember, **sodium adds up fast!** There's over 1,200 mg of sodium in the average club sandwich — and that's over half the daily limit for adults.



How can I cut down on sodium?

You don't have to give up all your favorite foods — just try these tips to cut down on sodium.

Cook more meals at home

Remember, most foods prepared outside of the home are high in sodium, including prepared or packaged foods you buy at the store and foods from restaurants. Cooking your own meals puts you in control! Just remember to choose ingredients that are low in sodium.

- Too busy to cook every night? Start by making dinner just 1 night a week — or make a big batch so you'll have leftovers to enjoy the next day.
- Looking for new, healthy recipes to try? Check out the MyPlate Kitchen tool at [MyPlate.gov/MyPlate-Kitchen](https://www.myplate.gov/MyPlate-Kitchen) — and select "Reduced sodium" under Nutrition Focus.

Check the label

Check the Nutrition Facts label to see if foods are **low** or **high** in sodium. Look at the % Daily Value (DV):

- **5% DV or less** is a **low** source of sodium
- **20% DV or more** is a **high** source of sodium

More often, choose foods that are lower in sodium.

Nutrition Facts

4 servings per container	
Serving size	1 cup (227g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	280
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 9g	12%
Saturated Fat 4.5g	23%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 35mg	12%
Sodium 850mg	37%
Total Carbohydrate 34g	12%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 6g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars 0%	
Protein 15g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 320mg	25%
Iron 1.6mg	8%
Potassium 510mg	10%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Try these healthy lower-sodium swaps

- Add flavor with herbs and spices instead of salt
- Snack on crunchy veggies or unsalted nuts instead of salted chips or pretzels
- Choose fresh chicken and turkey, lean meats, or seafood instead of deli meats or sausages

Look for lower-sodium options when you eat out

- At restaurants, ask for nutrition information and choose dishes that are lower in sodium
- Get dressings and sauces on the side – and only use what you need
- Eat a smaller portion or split a meal with a friend

Remember, small changes make a big difference! So **start simple** – begin cutting down on sodium today.

- Learn about the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and get more resources to help you eat healthy at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)
- Find more healthy eating tips and recipes at [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov)
- Learn about the DASH eating plan that can help lower your blood pressure at [nhlbi.nih.gov/Health-Topics/DASH-Eating-Plan](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/Health-Topics/DASH-Eating-Plan)



Did you know?

All types of salt have sodium, including:

- Table salt
- Kosher salt
- Sea salt
- Himalayan salt

