

Tips for Cutting Back on Salt

For some people, too much salt or sodium in their diet can cause or worsen high blood pressure. It can also promote an imbalance of fluids in your body, causing further health concerns. Here are some tips to cut back on salt while still enjoying flavorful foods.

Salt or sodium is found in many processed, packaged, and fast foods, such as canned vegetables, tomato sauce, frozen or boxed dinners, and salty snack foods like chips and pretzels. There's also a lot of sodium in cured or canned meats such as bacon, ham, sausage, Spam, and bologna; pickles; and condiments like shoyu (soy sauce), fish sauce, ketchup, and barbecue and teriyaki sauces. Limiting these types of foods will significantly decrease the amount of sodium you eat.

Most healthy American adults should eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium a day, including any salt you add to meals. That's about one teaspoon of table salt. Adults with pre-hypertension, high blood pressure, or chronic kidney disease are recommended to consume no more than 1,500 mg of sodium a day.

Item	mg of sodium
1 teaspoon of salt	2,300
1 cup miso soup	1,460
1 tablespoon patis (fish sauce)	1,088
1 cup pinakbet (pork with vegetables)	1,083
1 cup kim chee	1,050
1 teaspoon baking soda	1,000
1 tablespoon shoyu (soy sauce)	914
1 ume (pickled plum)	810
1 slice Spam (2 ounces)	767
1 tablespoon low-sodium shoyu	620
Individual products may vary. Check the food label.	

Use salt substitutes

Many salt substitutes are available at the supermarket. Check the nutrition facts to be sure they are very low in sodium or sodium-free. Be aware of the potassium content in salt substitutes if you're limiting potassium.

You can also make your own salt-free blends at home with herbs and spices such as thyme, oregano, rosemary, cumin, sage, marjoram, cayenne, chili powder, or basil. Combine ingredients, keep them in a covered container, and add to foods for extra flavor.

Examples:

Mixed herb blend

¼ cup dried parsley flakes
2 tablespoons dried tarragon
1 tablespoon each of dried oregano, dill weed, and celery flakes

Italian blend

2 tablespoons each of dried basil and dried marjoram
1 tablespoon each of garlic powder and dried oregano
2 teaspoons each of thyme, crushed dried rosemary, and crushed red pepper

Mexican blend

¼ cup chili powder
1 tablespoon each of ground cumin and onion powder
1 teaspoon each of dried oregano, garlic powder, and ground red pepper
½ teaspoon cinnamon

Get creative and grow your own herbs at home. We're lucky because we can grow fresh herbs year-round. Even a small container on your lanai can provide herbs to add great flavor to your cooking.

Adding more seasonings instead of salt to a recipe can add a lot of flavor. Try adding garlic, onion, ginger, pepper, chili pepper, lemon, or lime.

Read the food label

An easy way to find out how much sodium you're eating is to read the food label.

Look for the serving size located under the words "Nutrition Facts." In this example, the amounts listed are for one serving (2/3 cup); if you eat twice that, you'll need to double the amounts and percentages.

How much are you eating? How many servings are there in the container or package?

Look for foods with less than 140 mg sodium per serving.

The recommendations for the DASH (dietary approach to stop hypertension) diet are:

- Sodium: Less than 2,300 mg a day
- Cholesterol: Less than 150 mg a day
- Fiber: At least 30 g a day

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)

Amount per serving
Calories **230**

% Daily Value *

Total Fat 8g **10%**

Saturated Fat 1g **5%**

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 160mg **7%**

Total Carbohydrate 37g **13%**

Dietary Fiber 4g **14%**

Total Sugars 12g

Includes 10g Added Sugars **20%**

Protein 3g

Vitamin D 2mcg 10%

Calcium 260mg 20%

Iron 8mg 45%

Potassium 235 mg 6%

*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.

Cook more at home

Meat, fish, and poultry

- Bake, broil, or barbecue
- Braise or stew leaner cuts of meat to make them more tender
- Use low-fat ground turkey in chili
- Remove skin and fat before cooking
- Bake on a rack so the fat drains off
- Buy meats in 3- to 4-ounce portions
- Season with herbs and spices instead of butter

Soups and salads

- Use pureed potato instead of cream to thicken soups
- Try homemade oil and vinegar dressings

Baking

- Use vegetable oil in place of butter or shortening
- Replace half the fat in recipes with applesauce
- Use whole-grain flour
- Replace whole eggs with egg whites

Frying

- Use nonstick pans or cooking spray instead of oil

Focus on fresh foods

Food group	Foods recommended
Grains	<p>Bread, bagels, and rolls without salted tops</p> <p>Homemade bread made with reduced-sodium baking powder</p> <p>Cold cereals, especially shredded wheat and puffed rice</p> <p>Oats, grits, and cream of wheat</p> <p>Pasta, quinoa, and rice</p> <p>Popcorn, pretzels, and crackers without salt</p> <p>Corn tortillas</p>
Protein Foods	<p>Fresh meats and fish and turkey bacon (check the nutrition labels to make sure they're not packaged in a sodium solution)</p> <p>Canned or packed tuna (no more than 4 ounces in 1 serving)</p> <p>Beans and peas</p> <p>Soy beans and tofu</p> <p>Eggs</p> <p>Nuts and nut butters without salt</p>
Dairy	<p>Milk and milk powder</p> <p>Plant milks, such as rice and soy</p> <p>Yogurt, including Greek yogurt</p> <p>Small amounts of natural cheese (blocks of cheese) or reduced-sodium cheese can be used in moderation (Swiss, ricotta, and fresh mozzarella cheese are lower in sodium than the others)</p> <p>Cream cheese</p> <p>Low-sodium cottage cheese</p>
Vegetables	<p>Fresh and frozen vegetables without added sauces or salt</p> <p>Homemade soups (without salt)</p> <p>Low-sodium, salt-free, and sodium-free canned vegetables and soups</p>
Fruit	<p>Fresh and canned fruits</p> <p>Dried fruits, such as raisins, cranberries, and prunes</p>
Oils	<p>Tub and liquid margarine, regular or without salt</p> <p>Canola, corn, peanut, olive, safflower, and sunflower oils</p>
Condiments	<p>Fresh or dried herbs such as basil, bay leaf, dill, mustard (dry), nutmeg, paprika, parsley, rosemary, sage, and thyme</p> <p>Low-sodium ketchup</p> <p>Vinegar</p> <p>Lemon and lime juice</p> <p>Pepper, red pepper flakes, and cayenne</p> <p>Hot sauce (it contains sodium, but if you use just a drop or two, it won't add up to much)</p> <p>Salt-free or sodium-free seasoning mixes and marinades</p> <p>Simple salad dressings: vinegar and oil</p>



Make healthier choices when eating out

Choose foods carefully when you eat outside your home. Restaurant foods can be very high in sodium, fat, and calories. Many restaurants provide nutrition facts on their menus or their websites. If you cannot find that information, ask your server. Let your server know that you want your food to be cooked without salt and that you'd like your salad dressing and sauces on the side.

Chinese

Focus on steamed dishes with vegetables, prepared with no added fat or sodium. Chinese food is usually high in sodium because of the sauces and large portions.

- Start with tea. It will help fill you up and doesn't have any calories.
- Choose steamed dumplings instead of high-sodium soup as an appetizer.
- Order a vegetarian entrée that's stir-fried or steamed.
- Steamed or stir-fried chicken, shrimp, or vegetable dishes are usually lower in fat and sodium than noodle dishes.
- Ask for the sauce on the side to decrease the amount of sodium.
- Ask for low-sodium sauces.
- Ask for brown rice.
- Split your entrée with a friend or save half for another meal.

Italian

Pasta is low in fat. When pasta dishes are prepared with tomato sauce or olive oil, they can be a healthy choice.

- Tell your waiter not to bring the bread, which is generally low in fiber and high in calories.
- Try a vegetable appetizer, such as a green salad or roasted peppers. These choices are much lower in fat than fried calamari or cheese appetizers.
- Order an appetizer portion or side portion as an entrée with a green salad.
- Choose pasta with red or marinara sauce instead of cream or cheese sauce.
- When ordering pizza, go light on the cheese and choose vegetable toppings like spinach, mushrooms, broccoli, onions, artichokes, and peppers.
- Skip the extra cheese and ask for extra spices, such as oregano, basil, thyme, black pepper, or red pepper flakes.
- Ask them not to salt the cooking water for your pasta.
- If available, choose high-fiber spinach or vegetable pasta instead of white-flour pasta.

Korean

Korean food offers a good variety of vegetables and grilled meats that can be low-fat and very satisfying. Cooking methods often include barbecuing, boiling, and steaming.

- Choose grilled, lean meats, chicken, fish, or shellfish as a main dish.
- Fresh vegetables make a great side dish.
- Avoid pickled vegetables, which are very high in sodium.
- Ask for brown rice.
- Ask for sauces on the side and season with chili pepper, garlic, or green onions in place of salty sauces or soju.



Hawaiian

Traditional Hawaiian foods include many healthy choices such as fish, banana, taro, seaweed, and breadfruit that are boiled, broiled, or roasted. Be aware of the modern or local variations that may use different cooking methods or ingredients that add fat, salt, and calories.

- Avoid foods that are high in sodium such as lomi lomi salmon, corned beef, and salted or dried fish and seafood.
- Choose raw or grilled fish with vegetables such as ferns, luau (taro leaves), and starches such as taro, poi, sweet potato, yams, or breadfruit.
- Poke (made with raw fish) should be prepared with limited amounts of shoyu and Hawaiian salt. Instead, choose those flavored with onions or chili pepper.
- Remember, Hawaiian salt contains about as much sodium as regular table salt.
- Coconut is high in saturated fat and calories, so eat it in small amounts.

Filipino

Filipino dishes can be healthy with lots of vegetables and small portions of lean meats. Be aware that many sauces can be high in salt, depending on the preparation.

- Avoid fried dishes.
- Look for dishes with fish and vegetables instead of fatty meats.
- Avoid salty foods such as daing (dried fish), tinapa (salted, smoked fish), tocino (bacon-style pork), and itlog na maalat (salted eggs).
- Use less of the high-sodium sauces, such as toyo (soy sauce), patis (fish sauce), bagoong alamang (shrimp paste), and vestin (monosodium glutamate).

Japanese

Fish and soy are great choices for your heart health. Add a wide variety of vegetables and rice for a well-balanced meal.

- Start with tea to help fill you up instead of miso soup, which is high in sodium.
- The best choices are sashimi, edamame, tofu, steamed fish, and vegetables.
- Choose steamed rather than tempura or fried foods to save on calories and fat.
- Choose sushi with vegetables and fresh fish (not fried).
- Ask for brown rice.
- Buckwheat or soba noodles have more fiber than white noodles.
- Avoid using extra shoyu or dilute it with water to make your own light version.
- Use ginger, vinegar, or wasabi as flavoring instead of shoyu.