



UVA Nutrition Services



UVA Digestive Health Center

LOW SODIUM (SALT) EATING TIPS

Too much sodium in your diet can cause your body to retain an unhealthy amount of fluid. This fluid can collect in your hands, legs, ankles, belly, and lungs. This may cause problems if you have liver, heart, or kidney disease.

How Much Sodium is too Much?

- ∨ Aim for a daily intake of sodium of 2000 milligrams (mg) or less.
- ∨ Keep in mind, one teaspoon of salt contains 2,300 mg of sodium.
- ∨ **Using less salt in cooking and at the table goes a long way, but you will also need to limit foods that have high amounts of sodium.**
- ∨ If you're worried about losing the taste in your food. Try incorporating fresh herbs and spices such as garlic, onion, basil, thyme, or oregano into your recipes.
- ∨ Read labels for sodium content. Here are some tips:
 - Choose side dishes or snacks with 140 mg or less sodium per serving
 - Each meal should have 600 mg sodium *or less*

How can you reduce the Sodium/Salt in your diet?

Eat more *fresh* foods.

Eat *less* commercially canned or processed foods.

Eat at home *more* often.

Use fresh/dried herbs and spices to season foods during cooking and at the table.

Use onion, garlic, peppers, carrots and other vegetables to season rice, pasta, potato, and meat dishes.

Read labels for sodium content. Here are some tips:

- Choose side dishes or snacks with 140 mg or less sodium per serving
- Each meal should have 600 mg sodium *or less*

Note: **"low fat" does not mean "low sodium"**

What Do You Look For When Reading Food Labels?

Sodium can also be added during the processing or preparation of foods. Look on the label for the word "salt", "sodium," or "monosodium glutamate." Remember, always check the **servicing size**. All facts on the nutrition label are based on the stated serving size. Many foods are now labeled with **general healthy food claims**. If a label makes the statement that it is a healthy selection, it is not necessarily low in sodium. It may be in reference to less calories or fat.

Label Term	Meaning
Sodium-Free	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
Very Low Sodium	35 mg or less of sodium per serving
Low Sodium	140 mg or less of sodium per serving
Reduced or less sodium	At least 25% less sodium than a serving size of the original product
Unsalted, no salt added, without added salt	May contain sodium as a natural part of the food, but no additional sodium or salt is added during processing

Food Group:	Choose these lower sodium foods:	Limit these high sodium foods:
<i>Fruits</i>	All fruits and fruit juices	No need to limit any (canned fruits do not contain sodium)
<i>Vegetables</i>	Fresh or frozen vegetables, "No salt added" canned vegetables (<i>Draining + rinsing regular canned vegetables will help remove some sodium, but fresh or frozen are the best choices</i>), low sodium vegetable juices	Regular canned vegetables or juices (example: V8 [®] , tomato), pickles, olives, relish, vegetables in a cream, butter or cheese sauce
<i>Starches</i>	Loaf bread, dinner rolls, English muffins, Plain pasta, noodles, plain rice, fresh potatoes, dried beans, peas, lentils (<i>Try cooking with onion and garlic for flavor</i>); Cooked hot cereals, unsalted or low sodium snack foods, (<i>Look for "no salt added" or "low sodium"</i>), low sodium ready to eat cereals such as <i>Puffed rice, wheat or shredded wheat cereals</i>	Biscuits, Prepared mixes (pancake, muffins, cornbread), Seasoned mixes-rice and noodles (Ramen noodles, Noodle Roni [®] , Rice-a-Roni [®] , macaroni and cheese), Coating Mixes (seasoned bread crumbs, Shake'n'Bake [®]), Salted snacks (potato chips, nacho chips, peanut butter crackers, corn chips, pretzels, pork rinds), instant potatoes
<i>Dairy</i>	Milk and yogurt, ice cream, frozen yogurt, low Sodium Cheeses (Swiss, Mozzarella, Grated Parmesan) <i>Note: Low Fat does not mean low sodium</i>	Buttermilk, processed cheeses: (American, Nacho and Bleu Cheeses, and others), Cheese spreads and cheese dips (Cheez Whiz [®] , Easy Cheese [®]), Pimento cheese, Cottage cheese. <i>Read the labels, cheese varies in sodium content</i>
<i>Meats and Meat Substitutes:</i>	Fresh or frozen un-breaded meats (chicken, turkey, fish, beef, lamb, pork, veal), eggs prepared without salt, regular peanut butter (<i>Low sodium is best</i>), unsalted nuts, soy	Processed luncheon meats (Bologna, Salami, Pastrami, Ham, Turkey, Corned beef), ham, sausage, bacon, hotdogs, breaded or battered meats (Chicken nuggets & fish sticks), salted, cured or smoked meats, canned meats (Spam [®] & potted meat - <i>unless labeled low sodium</i>)
<i>Fats:</i>	Plant oils (example: olive, canola), tub or squeeze margarine, low-sodium or homemade salad dressings, mayonnaise	Bacon and bacon grease, salt pork and fat back, commercial salad dressings (<i>unless labeled low sodium</i>)
<i>Seasonings and condiments:</i>	Fresh or dried herbs and spices; Use vinegar, lemon juice and fruit juices for marinades; Onion and garlic (fresh, minced, dried in flakes or powdered), pepper, celery seed, and dried vegetable flakes, Mustard, low sodium bouillon; and spice and herb blends without added salt (example: Mrs. Dash [®])	Salt, sea salt, lite salt, bouillon cubes; potassium-containing salt substitutes (Nu-Salt [®] , No Salt [®]); Seasoning salts (garlic or onion salt, celery salt); Spice and herb mixes with added salt (Old Bay [®]) or Large amounts of Commercially prepared sauces such as Teriyaki, soy, ketchup, or BBQ sauce