

Salt and Sodium: Get the Facts

Fact: Sodium is found in salt.

- All types of salt are high in sodium.
 - Kosher salt, sea salt, fleur de sel, gourmet salt and smoked salt all have about the same amount of sodium as table salt. They are not healthier choices.

Fact: We eat too much sodium.

- We all need some sodium, but most of us eat about 3400 mg per day. This is more than double the amount of sodium we need.
 - Healthy adults need only 1500 mg of sodium per day. Healthy children need only 1000-1500 mg of sodium per day.

Fact: Eating too much sodium can be harmful to our health.

- Eating too much sodium can cause high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease and kidney disease.
 - Eating less sodium can help you and your family stay healthy and feel your best.

Fact: Most of the foods we eat contain too much sodium.

- Over 75% of the sodium we eat comes from processed foods such as cheese, deli meats, pizza, sauces and soups.
 - Packaged and ready-to-eat foods, fast foods and restaurant meals are often high in sodium.
 - Breads, breakfast cereals and bakery products also contain sodium even though they may not taste salty.

At the Grocery Store – *Buy lower sodium foods to prepare healthier meals at home*

Read the information on food packages

- Buy unsalted and lower sodium foods whenever possible. Look for words such as “sodium-free”, “low sodium”, “reduced sodium,” or “no added salt” on the package.
- Compare food labels. Buy the products with the lowest amounts of sodium.
- Look for foods that contain less than 360 mg of sodium per serving.
 - You can also use the % Daily Value (%DV) on the label to compare products and see if the food has **a little** or **a lot** of sodium.

**Here is a good guide: 5% DV or less is a little
15% DV or more is a lot.**

- Look for products with a sodium content of less than 15% DV.
- Check the food labels often because product ingredients may change.

Make wise choices from the four food groups in Canada’s Food Guide

- **Vegetables and Fruit** - Buy fresh or frozen vegetables whenever possible. Look for canned vegetables that are low in sodium. Buy low sodium vegetable juice and tomato juice.
 - **Grain Products** - Choose breads, breakfast cereals and bakery products that are lowest in sodium. Enjoy a variety of grains such as barley, quinoa and rice which are naturally sodium free.
 - **Milk and Alternatives** - Enjoy milk, fortified soy beverages and yogurt because they are low in sodium.
- **Meat and Alternatives** - Buy unseasoned meat, poultry, fish, seafood and tofu. Choose unsalted nuts. Buy low sodium canned beans or try dried beans, peas and lentils.

At Home – Prepare your own meals often, using little or no salt.

Make healthy meals and snacks

- Eat fewer packaged, ready-to-eat and take-out foods.
 - Make your own soups, sauces and salad dressings. Find quick and easy recipes at www.dietitians.ca/YourHealth.
 - Enjoy more vegetables and fruit. Use fresh or frozen instead of canned whenever possible.
 - Cook pasta, rice or hot cereal without adding salt.
 - Taste your food before adding salt.

Try these easy ways to cut back on sodium every day:

Try...	Instead of...
Fresh fruit and vegetables, unsalted popcorn or unsalted nuts	Chips, salted pretzels or other salty snacks
Rice cooked in water or juice	Rice cooked in salty broth
Yogurt	Cottage cheese
Sandwiches made with roasted meat or poultry, eggs or natural peanut butter	Sandwiches made with canned or deli meat
Fresh or dried herbs and spices, garlic, ginger, onion, vinegar and lemon and lime juice	Salt, kosher salt, sea salt, fleur de sel, gourmet salt, smoked salt, celery salt, garlic salt or onion salt
Oil, unsalted margarine or unsalted butter	Salted margarine or salted butter

Reduce the sodium in the foods you use

- Rinse canned vegetables and canned beans, peas and lentils to wash away some of the sodium.
 - Use less of the seasoning that comes with taco kits, packaged macaroni and cheese, pasta and rice mixes.
- Use less salt than what the recipe calls for, except when baking.
- Use less ketchup, soy sauce and other condiments, or try the lower sodium option.

Add flavour without sodium

- Flavour foods with herbs and spices. Here are a few ideas:
 - Basil - tastes great with tomatoes and pasta
 - Cumin – adds flavour to soups, stews and sauces
 - Curry – good with meat, poultry and stews
 - Dill – wonderful with fish, potatoes and eggs
 - Oregano – perfect in pasta, soups and salads

- Paprika – good with seafood, vegetables, potato salad and eggs
- Rosemary – delicious with chicken, lamb and pork
- Thyme – tasty with chicken, veal, salads and vegetables

Eating Out – Choose wisely when eating out

Make lower sodium menu choices

- Order smaller portions or share with someone.
 - Ask for gravy, sauces and salad dressings “on the side”, and use only small amounts.
 - Flavour your food with lemon or pepper instead of adding salt, sauces or gravy.
 - Balance out your day. If you ate a high sodium restaurant meal today, make sure you eat a lower sodium meal at home.
 - Ask for your meal to be cooked without salt or monosodium glutamate (MSG), a seasoning that is very high in sodium.

Find the best menu choices

- Check the nutrition information of menu items before you order and choose foods with less sodium. This information may be in a poster or pamphlet at the restaurant or on the restaurant’s website.

Try these easy ways to cut back on sodium when you eat out:

If you’re eating...	Choose this...	Instead of...
North American food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lettuce, onions or tomatoes on burgers, hot dogs and sandwiches • grilled or roasted chicken sandwich • salad with dressing on the side, or a baked potato 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cheese, ketchup, mustard or pickles on burgers, hot dogs and sandwiches • chicken wings or chicken fingers • French fries or fried onion rings
Chinese food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • steamed rice, steamed buns or dim sum rice noodle rolls served with sodium-reduced soy sauce on the side • stir-fry vegetables with garlic • steamed fish • wonton noodles or rice noodles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fried rice or dim sum appetizers served in soy, hoisin, fish or black bean sauces • stir-fry vegetables in oyster sauce • BBQ pork or duck • chow mein or fried rice noodles
Indian food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plain rice • roti or chapatti • tandoori dishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pilau • naan or parantha • curry dishes or biryani
Italian food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grilled fish, meat or poultry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lasagna or parmigiana dishes • pasta in

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• pasta in garlic and olive oil• pizza with vegetable toppings	tomato or marinara sauce • pizza with bacon, extra cheese or pepperoni
--	---	--

Let your taste buds enjoy the flavour of food with less sodium!