

Low sodium (salt) diet

How much sodium should I consume in a day on a low sodium diet?

The average Canadian diet contains about 3400mg of sodium per day. A low sodium diet means limiting sodium intake to 1500 - 2300mg per day. You can use the guidelines in this education booklet to help you follow a low sodium diet.

How do I limit my sodium intake?

The key steps to following a low sodium diet are to:

1. Limit the amount of salt and high sodium seasonings/condiments that are added to foods at the table and during food preparation
2. Limit the amount of high sodium foods in your diet

STEP 1

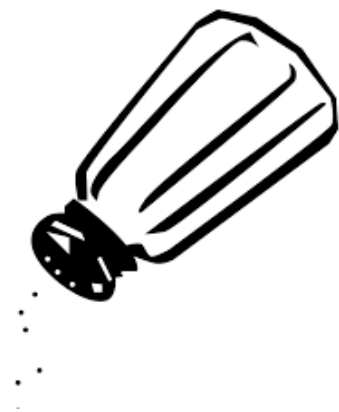
Limit salt, high sodium seasonings and condiments

Adding salt or high sodium seasonings/condiments to foods at the table or during food preparation on a regular basis can lead to excessive sodium in our diet.

Table salt, sea salt, rock salt, kosher salt and Himalayan salt are some examples of salts that are high in sodium.

Common seasonings or condiments that are also high in sodium include:

- Seasonings made with salt (e.g. garlic salt, onion salt, lemon salt, celery salt)
- Soy sauce
- Teriyaki sauce
- Steak sauce
- Most BBQ sauces
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)



The following are some tips to help reduce the amount of added salt, high sodium seasonings and condiments in your diet.

Instead of adding salt, high sodium seasonings or condiments to foods, try:

- ✓ *adding commercial ‘salt-free’ seasoning blends to flavor food dishes during preparation or at the table**
- ✓ *minced, powdered or fresh garlic during food preparation*
- ✓ *powdered or minced onion during food preparation*
- ✓ *adding lemon or lime juice to food dishes*
- ✓ *adding chopped fresh herbs, such as cilantro, oregano, rosemary or basil*
- ✓ *flavour-infused olive oils (e.g. sun dried tomato olive oil, roasted garlic olive oil) or sesame oil during food preparation*
- ✓ *dried herbs and/or spices to flavour dishes*
- ✓ *using the pepper shaker instead of the salt shaker at the table*
- ✓ *a small amount of hot sauce*
- ✓ *a dash of balsamic, red wine, or apple cider vinegar*

* Salt-free seasoning blends can be found in the seasoning section of the supermarket. Look for ‘Salt-free’ or ‘No salt added’ on the label. Some brands of salt-free seasonings include: Mrs. Dash, McCormick Salt-free seasonings, Clubhouse Salt-free seasonings, President’s Choice Blue Menu No Salt Added seasonings



TIP

Try making your own salt-free seasoning blend

Mix the following ingredients well together and store in a jar or shaker container to add flavour to your dishes:



5 teaspoons onion powder

1 tablespoon paprika

1/2 teaspoon pepper

1/2 teaspoon celery seed

1 tablespoon ground mustard

1 tablespoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon dried thyme

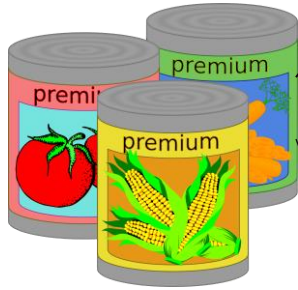
STEP 2

Limit high sodium foods

Sodium is an ingredient that is added to many food products by food companies to enhance flavor or is sometimes added as a preservative. You may not always be aware of the amount of sodium that is added to the food products you are consuming. This sodium is often referred to as ‘hidden’ sodium, and is often the largest source of sodium in our diet.

The best way to find out how much ‘hidden’ sodium we are consuming is to look at the **Nutrition Facts Table**. The Nutrition Facts table can be found on the label of most packaged food products. This table lists the amount of various nutrients that are found in a food product, including sodium.

Example of a Nutrition Facts table



Nutrition Facts			
Serving size: ¼ cup (175g)			
Amount	% Daily value		
Calories 100			
Fat 1g	1%		
Saturated 0.5g	3%		
+ Trans 0g			
Cholesterol 0mg			
Sodium 670mg	28%		
Carbohydrate 20g	7%		
Fibre 4g	16%		
Sugars 2g			
Protein 3g			
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 10%		
Calcium 10%	Iron	25%	

Take a look to see how much sodium is in the food products you are using. The amount of sodium in a food product is listed in milligrams (mg) per serving.

How much sodium is too much?

Food products that have 200mg or less sodium per serving are considered low in sodium. These are the best choices when you are trying to limit the sodium in your diet.

Food products that have 200 - 400mg sodium per serving are considered higher in sodium. It is best to use these foods in very limited amounts when following a low sodium diet.

Foods that have more than 400mg of sodium per serving are considered very high in sodium. It is best to avoid these foods when following a low sodium diet.

200mg or less sodium per serving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low sodium • Best choices
200 - 400mg sodium per serving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher sodium • Use in very limited amounts
More than 400mg sodium per serving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very high sodium • Try to avoid

Understanding Sodium-content Claims on a Food Label

Food companies sometimes put a claim about the salt or sodium content of a food product on the food label. These claims can be used to help identify foods that are lower in sodium. The different claims that are used for sodium or salt are explained below.

Sodium-content claim	What the claim it means
Salt-free or No salt	Less than 5 mg sodium/serving
Low salt	140 mg or less of sodium/serving
Lower salt or Reduced salt	At least 25% less sodium than the food to which it is compared (Check Nutrition Facts table to verify whether low in sodium)*
Lightly salted	At least 50% less sodium than the food to which it is compared (Check Nutrition Facts table to verify whether low in sodium)*
No added salt	Contains no added salt, other sodium salts or ingredients that contain sodium

If a food label contains a claim about salt (sodium) it is still a good idea to look at the **Nutrition Facts Table to verify how much sodium(mg) is in the food product in some cases. For example, some food products labelled as Lower salt, Reduced salt, and Lightly salted, may still contain higher amounts of sodium (more than 200mg sodium/serving).*

Try this Exercise

Which of the following packages of food are low in sodium, higher in sodium, or very high in sodium. The answers are provided at the bottom of the page.

Food A

Nutrition Facts			
Serving size: ¼ cup (175g)			
Amount	% Daily value		
Calories 100			
Fat 1g	1%		
Saturated 0.5g	3%		
+ Trans 0g			
Cholesterol 0mg			
Sodium 620mg	28%		
Carbohydrate 20g	7%		
Fibre 4g	16%		
Sugars 2g			
Protein 3g			
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 10%		
Calcium 10%	Iron	25%	

Food B

Nutrition Facts			
Serving size: ¼ cup (175g)			
Amount	% Daily value		
Calories 100			
Fat 1g	1%		
Saturated 0.5g	3%		
+ Trans 0g			
Cholesterol 0mg			
Sodium 50mg	6%		
Carbohydrate 20g	7%		
Fibre 4g	16%		
Sugars 2g			
Protein 3g			
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 10%		
Calcium 10%	Iron	25%	

Food C

Nutrition Facts			
Serving size: ¼ cup (175g)			
Amount	% Daily value		
Calories 100			
Fat 1g	1%		
Saturated 0.5g	3%		
+ Trans 0g			
Cholesterol 0mg			
Sodium 350mg	16%		
Carbohydrate 20g	7%		
Fibre 4g	16%		
Sugars 2g			
Protein 3g			
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 10%		
Calcium 10%	Iron	25%	

Food D

Nutrition Facts			
Serving size: ¼ cup (175g)			
Amount	% Daily value		
Calories 100			
Fat 1g	1%		
Saturated 0.5g	3%		
+ Trans 0g			
Cholesterol 0mg			
Sodium 180mg	10%		
Carbohydrate 20g	7%		
Fibre 4g	16%		
Sugars 2g			
Protein 3g			
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 10%		
Calcium 10%	Iron	25%	

Answer: Food A: very high sodium (more than 400mg), Food B and D: low sodium (less than 200mg), Food C: higher sodium (200-400mg)

Table of Lower and Higher Sodium Foods

The following table lists **Lower Sodium Foods** (200mg or less sodium per serving) and **Higher Sodium Foods** (more than 200mg sodium per serving).

Foods that are often very high sodium (more than 400mg per serving) are identified with an ☒

Try to choose lower sodium foods, limit higher sodium foods, and avoid very high sodium foods to help maintain a low sodium diet

	<i>Lower Sodium Foods</i>	<i>Higher Sodium Foods</i>
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fresh vegetables - Frozen vegetables - No salt added canned vegetables - Low sodium vegetable or tomato juice - Low sodium canned vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canned vegetables - Vegetable or tomato juice - Tomato or pasta sauce ☒ Pickled vegetables (e.g. pickles, sauerkraut, olives)
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fresh fruit - Frozen fruit - Dried fruit - Canned fruit - Fruit juices 	
Grain Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole grains (e.g. rice, quinoa, couscous, millet, barley) - Pasta and noodles - Most breads and rolls - Most dry cereals - Unsalted or low salt crackers - Unsalted or low salt breadsticks - Most rice cakes - Cooked cereals without 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most commercial pastries (e.g. donuts, muffins, croissants, danishes) - Most regular salted crackers - Instant hot cereals (e.g. instant flavoured oatmeal) - Commercial rice and pasta packaged mixes - Some breads and rolls (check label) - Some dry cereals (check label)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> added salt (e.g. oatmeal) - Most waffles, pancakes or mixes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some rice cakes (check label) - Some waffles, pancakes or mixes (check label)
Milk and Milk Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Milk - Soy or rice beverages - Yogurt or kefir - Condensed milk - Eggnog - Sour cream - Cream cheese - Low sodium or reduced sodium cheeses (check label) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Processed cheese slices - Cheese spreads and sauces - Most commercial hot chocolate mixes - Most regular cheeses
Meat and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fresh fish, poultry or meat - Frozen fish, poultry, meat with no added salt - Low sodium canned fish - Dried beans and legumes (e.g. chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils) - Unsalted nuts and seeds - Peanut or other nut and seed butters - Tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Processed or deli meats (e.g. bacon, ham, hot dogs, corned beef, luncheon meats) - Most canned fish (check label) - Commercial breaded meat, poultry or fish products - Commercial meat pies - Canned baked beans - Canned beans and legumes (e.g. chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils) - Most salted nuts - Most vegetarian meat analogues (e.g. veggie burgers, sausages)
Oils and Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vegetable oils (e.g. olive oil, canola oil, flaxseed oil) - Some commercial salad dressings (check label) - Some commercial dips (check label) - Margarine, butter - Mayonnaise - Homemade salad dressings without added salt (e.g. oil and vinegar or lemon juice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most commercial salad dressings (check label) - Most commercial dips (check label) - Commercial gravies or gravy mixes

<p>Condiments and Seasonings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commercial non-salt seasonings blends (e.g. Mrs. Dash, McCormick's) - Fresh herbs - Dried herbs - Lemon and lime juice - Vinegar - Worcestershire sauce* - Mustard* - Ketchup* - Hot pepper or chili sauce* (e.g. Tobasco) - Salsa* - Relish* <p><i>*Use in moderation as large amounts can contribute excess sodium to your diet</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Salt for seasoning (e.g. table salt, sea salt, kosher salt, Himalayan salt) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seasonings made with salt (e.g. garlic salt, onion salt, lemon salt, celery salt) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Soy sauce <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teriyaki sauce - Steak sauce - Most BBQ sauces (check label) - Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
<p>Soups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homemade broths and soups without added salt (or 1/10 teaspoon salt or less per 250ml serving) - Commercial soups or broths with less than 200/mg sodium per serving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Instant soup mixes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bouillon cubes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Most commercially packaged soups and broths
<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homemade hamburgers without added salt - Homemade French fries without added salt (or 1/10 teaspoon salt or less per serving) - Frozen or T.V. dinners with less than 600mg per meal - Snack foods without added salt (or 200mg or less sodium per serving) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fast food items such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - French fries <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hamburgers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pizzas <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subs with processed meat <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Most Chinese food dishes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Many frozen or T.V. dinners - Many salted snack foods

Common Questions

How long will it take for my taste buds to adjust?

For many people the longer you follow a low sodium diet the more lower sodium foods taste more palatable and higher salt foods taste 'too salty'. It can take a few weeks for taste buds to start to adjust to the lower sodium diet.

What about naturally occurring sodium?

Many foods contain small amounts of naturally-occurring sodium (sodium naturally found in food). This only amounts to a small amount of sodium in our diet and does not need to be limited. Higher amounts of sodium in food (more than 200mg sodium per serving) is not due to naturally occurring sodium, but rather due to sodium added during food processing or preparation.

How do I limit sodium when eating out at a restaurant?

Meals served at restaurants are often high in sodium. Here are a few tips:

- Choose restaurants that can accommodate special requests
- Select fresh foods or foods that are grilled, baked or roasted (versus processed or deep fried foods)
- Request menu items to be prepared with little or no salt
- Ask for sauces on the side (often high in sodium)
- Limit use of high sodium condiments
- Consume small portions if high sodium foods ordered

Registered Dietitian: _____

905-378-4647 ext. _____

HOW ARE WE DOING?

*You can provide feedback
or suggestions for
Niagara Health Clinical
Nutrition services at:*

www.niagarahealth.on.ca/en/clinical-nutrition