

SHAKE THE SODIUM HABIT: 10 TIPS for cutting back

The *U.S. Food & Drug Administration* recommends that healthy adults limit their sodium intake to 2,300 mg a day—the equivalent of 1 teaspoon of salt. Too much salt in the diet can lead to high blood pressure, which increases your risk of heart disease. For our heart patients, however, we like to set an even lower intake of less than 2,000 mg of sodium a day.



Here are some tips for cutting the sodium from your diet and making smart food choices for a healthy heart and lifestyle.

1 Think fresh. Eat highly processed foods less often and in smaller portions, especially cheesy foods, pizza, cured meats, bacon, sausage, hot dogs, deli/ luncheon meats, and many ready-to-eat foods, including chili, ravioli, and soup.

2 Enjoy home-prepared foods. Cook more often at home where you are in control of what is in your food. Aim to create meals with less than 600 mg of sodium. Freeze your food in meal-size portions for lunches and dinners. Also, look for low-sodium options in the frozen food section of the grocery, such as try Healthy Choice® or Lean Cuisine® meals.

3 Fill up on vegetables and fruits—they are naturally low in sodium. Choose fresh, frozen or canned without salt. Eat a veggie or fruit at every meal.

4 Choose dairy and protein foods lower in sodium. Choose low-fat milk, and enjoy yogurt instead of high-sodium choices like cottage cheese and most yellow cheeses. Choose fresh beef, pork, poultry and seafood rather than those with salt added.

5 Adjust your taste buds by cutting back on salt little by little.

6 Skip the salt. Use spices, herbs, garlic, vinegar or lemon juice to season foods. Try black or red pepper, basil, curry, ginger or rosemary. Keep salt off of the table and kitchen counter. Try liquid smoke.

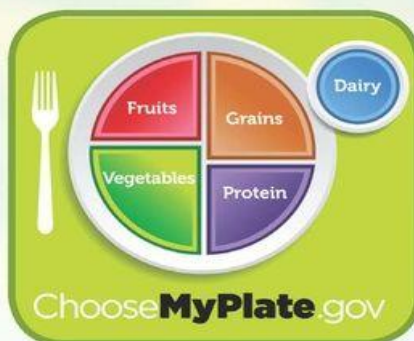
7 Read the labels. Look for foods labeled “low sodium,” “reduced sodium” or “no added salt.” An item is low sodium if it is less than 140 mg per serving. Make sure you know what is a serving.

8 Dining out? Ask for a low-sodium menu. Avoid cheeses and sauces, or ask that they be put on the side. Eat a smaller portion—bring half your entrée home. Avoid Chinese and Mexican fare—they are usually very high in sodium.

9 Pay attention to condiments. Soy sauce, pickles, olives, ketchup, salad dressings and seasoning packets are high in sodium. Have carrots and celery rather than pickles. Make your own salad dressings and sauces.

10 Check out other resources for tips and ideas, such as:

- American Heart Association's *Low Salt Cookbook*
- Dick@lowsodium.com
- HeartHealthyOnline.com
- CalorieKing.com
- MrsDash.com



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