Knowing what foods are high in sodium can help you stay within your sodium limit. One teaspoon of regular table salt (sodium chloride) contains over 2,000 milligrams (mg) of sodium. This is more than the amount of sodium you are allowed in a day.

This handout gives tips to help you stick with your low-sodium meal plan.

**Basic Tips**

- Instead of using table salt to flavor foods, try using fresh herbs and spices, lemon juice, or vinegar.
- Adapt your foods to low-sodium versions. There are many low-sodium cookbooks you can buy and low-sodium recipes online.
- Try making meals from scratch instead of buying prepared or prepackaged foods.
- Choose foods that are naturally low in sodium. These include fresh fruits and vegetables, dried grains, and grilled or baked fresh meats and fish.
- Learn how to read food labels. Always check the sodium content.
- Keep a food log. See the references at the end of this handout for websites that may help.

**Use Less Salt in Recipes**

- For most recipes, you can use half as much salt as the recipe calls for without changing the flavor very much. (This may not be true for some baking recipes that contain yeast.)
- Use fresh or dried herbs and spices instead of salt to add flavor.
- Use “low-sodium” baking powder instead of regular baking powder. This reduces sodium by about 500 mg per teaspoon.
- Use fresh roasted pork instead of ham in recipes.
- Make foods from scratch. For example:
  - A homemade pizza made with an English muffin, low-sodium pasta sauce, mozzarella cheese, grilled chicken, and vegetables has about 450 mg sodium.
  - ½ of a frozen pizza with meat and vegetables has more than 1,000 mg sodium.

Packaged Foods

How Sodium Is Listed on a Nutrition Facts Label

The amount of sodium in a serving size is listed in milligrams (mg) on a Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods. For example, a 1-cup serving of a product has 660 mg of sodium. If you are on a 2,000 mg (2 gm) sodium diet, this is ⅓ of your daily allowance.

On the left is a sample Nutrition Facts label that shows where to look for the sodium content. Be sure to note the serving size. If you eat 2 servings of the food, you have eaten 2 times the sodium shown on the label.

Sodium Claims

Sodium claims are often printed on food labels to help you make good choices. This list gives the meaning of various claims. It will help you choose the products that are right for you and your diet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sodium Free</td>
<td>Less than 5 mg sodium per serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt Free</td>
<td>Product meets requirements for “sodium free”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Low Sodium</td>
<td>35 mg or less sodium per serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Sodium</td>
<td>140 mg or less sodium per serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced or Less Sodium</td>
<td>At least 25% less sodium per serving than the regular product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light in Sodium</td>
<td>50% less sodium per serving than the regular product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsalted, No Salt Added,</td>
<td>Without Added Salt .......... No salt is added during processing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tips for Eating Out

- Try eating at salad bars:
  - Choose fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, and grilled chicken.
  - Limit high-sodium foods such as cheeses, salted nuts, chopped deli meats, and pasta salads.
  - Try oil and vinegar or lemon juice for dressing. Avoid regular or “lite” dressings – they are usually very high in sodium.

- Ask your server for:
  - Salad dressings and sauces on the side
  - Grilled meats with no salt added
  - Nutrition information about foods on the menu

  Many large chain restaurants now have nutrition information available at the restaurants and online.

- Choose restaurants that serve low-sodium options, such as fresh grilled meat and stir-fried vegetables without soy sauce. Most Asian, Italian, Mexican, and other ethnic foods can be very high in sodium.

- Limit your portion size. Try eating half the entrée and having a side salad with oil and vinegar. This will greatly reduce your sodium intake.

Food Tables

The food tables on the next page divide foods into 3 groups:

- Foods that are OK to eat on a low-sodium diet
- Foods that you can eat once in a while on a low-sodium diet
- Foods to avoid on a low-sodium diet

Use these tables to help choose foods for your low-sodium meal plan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Groups</th>
<th>OK to Eat</th>
<th>Eat Sometimes</th>
<th>Avoid These Foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>All fruits and fruit juices</td>
<td>Most canned vegetables with salt and low-sodium tomato and V-8 juice</td>
<td>Regular tomato or V-8 juice and ready-to-eat tomato sauces and pickled foods like sauerkraut, olives, and pickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>All fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables with no salt or sauces added</td>
<td>Tuna fish, canned without added salt and low-sodium tomato and V-8 juice</td>
<td>Tuna fish, canned with added salt and fried foods and corned beef and hot dogs and sausage and jerky and ham and bacon and frozen meals with more than 600 mg sodium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats and Other Protein Foods</td>
<td>Fresh meats, poultry, and fish (no salt added) and clams and mussels, steamed and unsalted peanut butter and nuts</td>
<td>Peanut butter and shellfish, not treated with salt and canned beans and frozen meals with less than 300 mg sodium</td>
<td>Corned beef and hot dogs and sausage and wild game and ham and bacon and frozen meals with more than 600 mg sodium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Unsalted butter and unsalted cottage cheese and milk and yogurt</td>
<td>Buttermilk and lower sodium cheeses like mozzarella, cheddar, and ricotta</td>
<td>High-sodium cheeses like feta, bleu, and goat cheese and cottage cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals, Grains, and Starches</td>
<td>Plain hot cereal and shredded wheat or puffed rice cereal and unsalted corn tortillas, granola, quick breads</td>
<td>Low-sodium breads and rice, pasta, whole grains, cooked without salt and unsalted potatoes and squash and salted crackers and pretzels and most cold cereals and most breads and muffins and pancakes and waffles</td>
<td>Stuffing mixes and cornbread and rice or noodles prepared with flavor packets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices, Seasonings, and Condiments</td>
<td>Fresh or dried herbs and powders, not salts (for example, use onion and garlic powder instead of onion and garlic salt) and tabasco (no more than 1 tablespoon)</td>
<td>Vinegar, lemon juice and lime juice and fresh garlic and sesame seeds and allspice and Mrs. Dash and Lawry’s salt-free seasonings and flavored extracts like vanilla and almond and some hot sauces (check label for sodium content)</td>
<td>Most canned soups and bouillion cubes and prepared broths and sauces: teriyaki, soy, fish, Worcestershire sauce, sea salt, regular salt, baking soda (regular) and garlic, onion, and other flavored or seasoned salts and relishes and monosodium glutamate (MSG) and meat tenderizers and ketchup and barbecue sauce and all seasonings packets and salad dressing and cheese sauce mixes, such as Alfredo sauce and olives and some hot sauces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Resources

Websites
These websites provide tools to help you keep track of your sodium intake:

- www.myfitnesspal.com
- www.livestrong.com

Books
- Pocket Guide to Low Sodium Foods, by Bobbie Mostyn
- The Complete Book of Food Counts (8th Edition), by Corinne Netzer

Low-Sodium Cookbooks
- The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Low Sodium Meals, by Shelly Vaughn James and Heidi McIndoo, RD
- No-Salt, Lowest-Sodium Cookbook, by Donald Gazzaniga
- 500 Low Sodium Recipes – Lose the Salt, Not the Flavor in Meals the Whole Family Will Love, by Dick Logue
- Get the Salt Out: 501 Simple Ways to Cut the Salt Out of Any Diet, by Ann Louise Gittleman
- Cooking Without a Grain of Salt, by Elma W. Bagg, Susan Bagg Todd, and Robert Ely Bagg

Questions?
Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Your Dietitian or Diet Technician:

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