



Cutting the Salt

How do we get so much salt?

Salt is everywhere, but we get most of our salt from eating out and eating processed foods. Believe it or not, our taste for salt is acquired. If you cut down slowly, you can learn to like less salt. Once you begin to enjoy the natural taste of foods, you will wonder how you ever ate so much salt before.

Nutrition labels tell you how much sodium foods contain.

Sodium is one of the chemicals that makes up salt. We only need about 1,500 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day; however, many of us get much more than that. On the nutrition label, there are three ways to tell if a food is low in sodium:

- **Look for the words "sodium free" or "low sodium."** Be careful about the term "reduced sodium" though. This term means the food has at least 25% less sodium than the usual product, but if the original food is very high in sodium, the reduced-sodium product may still have a lot.
- **Look at the total grams of sodium per serving.**
- **Look at the percent Daily Value of sodium per serving.** This number gives you the percentage of the total day's recommended sodium intake that 1 serving of the food provides. Foods with a Daily Value of sodium less than 5% are considered low in sodium. To control your sodium intake, choose more foods with less than 10% or even better less than 5% of the Daily Value. Foods with 6-19% of the Daily Value are considered moderately high in sodium, and foods with 20% of the Daily Value are considered very high in sodium. If you eat a high sodium food, balance it with a low sodium food.



Contact your local Extension agent at:

Processed foods are typically higher in sodium

Processed

vs

Fresh

- Canned green beans (1/2 c) - 178 mg
 - Processed American cheese (1 oz) - 460 mg
 - Small fast food hamburger - 500 mg
 - Turkey lunch meat (1 oz) - 301 mg
- Fresh cooked green beans (1/2 c) - 2 mg
 - Cheddar cheese (1 oz) - 176 mg
 - Homemade hamburger - 270 mg
 - Roasted fresh turkey (1 oz) - 20 mg
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Tips to cut back on salt

- Take the salt shaker off the table
- Cook pasta, noodles, rice, vegetables, & hot cereals in unsalted water
- Season with lemon juice or a small amount of table wine. Do not use cooking wine - it has salt.
- Rinse canned vegetables in a colander for 1 minute; then cook in fresh water.
- Leave the salt out of quick breads.
- Cut the salt in recipes by 1/4 to 1/2.
- Use frozen vegetables without salt instead of canned vegetables.
- Add 1/4 tsp each of dried herbs & spices or 3/4 tsp fresh herbs to recipes for every 4 servings.
- Prepare soups, stews, salads, & sauces a day ahead without salt to let the natural flavors blend.

Tips for using herbs & spices

- **Basil:** poultry, fish, meat, tomato dishes, vegetables, pasta, soups, vegetable salads
- **Cayenne:** beef, poultry, seafood, soups, stews, sauces, most vegetables
- **Dill:** fish, cream sauces, potatoes, green beans, cabbage, carrots
- **Ginger:** pork, poultry, Chinese dishes, fruit salads
- **Marjoram:** meat, fish, poultry, tomato dishes, salad dressing, broccoli, green beans, peas, eggplant
- **Nutmeg:** poultry, stews, creamed dishes, fruit, all vegetables except the cabbage family
- **Oregano:** poultry, fish, meat, tomato dishes, vegetables, pasta, soups, vegetable salads
- **Rosemary:** meat, poultry, fish, soups & stews, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower
- **Tarragon:** eggs, poultry, fish, salad dressing, cream soups & sauces, potatoes
- **Thyme:** meat, fish, poultry, fish soups or stews, vegetable salads, salad dressing