

Food Sources of Sodium

The current Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 recommend a daily sodium intake of 2300 milligrams. The average American is estimated to consume approximately 3400 milligrams of sodium daily, primarily as salt, which is a combination of the minerals sodium and chloride. Additives such as monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium nitrate or sodium nitrite, disodium phosphate, sodium citrate, and baking powder and baking soda also contain sodium.

The main sources of sodium in the typical American diet are:

- **Processed foods.** These foods are typically high in salt and sodium-containing additives. Examples include bread, cold cuts, bacon, ham, cheese, soups, canned vegetables, prepared meals such as pasta, meat dishes, egg dishes, hot dogs, pizza, and convenience foods in general.
- **Condiments.** Catsup, mustard, salad dressings, soy sauce, barbeque sauce, steak sauce, Worcestershire sauce, pickles, relishes, pickled foods, and many dips are sources of sodium.
- **Natural sources.** Some foods naturally contain some sodium and can add to overall sodium intake. Examples include dairy products (milk, cheese, cottage cheese), meats, and shellfish.
- **In the kitchen and at the table.** Many recipes call for salt, and many people also salt their food at the table.

The Nutrition Facts Panel (“food label”) on packages of processed foods is helpful in monitoring your sodium intake. Helpful sodium-related terms include:

- **Sodium-free or salt-free.** Each serving contains less than 5 mg of sodium.
- **Very low sodium.** Each serving contains 35 mg of sodium or less.
- **Low sodium.** Each serving contains 140 mg of sodium or less.
- **Reduced or less sodium.** The product contains at least 25 percent less sodium than the regular version. However, check how much sodium is in a serving as the reduced sodium product may still be relatively high in sodium.
- **Lite or light in sodium.** The sodium content has been reduced by at least 50 percent from the regular version. Again, check the label for the amount of sodium per serving.
- **Unsalted or no salt added.** No salt is added during processing. However, check the label for sodium content per serving as the food may contain ingredients that are high in sodium.

Cutting Back on Sodium

Salt is an acquired taste so you will need to help your taste buds adjust to less salt. Do so gradually by limiting your total daily salt intake to 1/4 teaspoon, from cooking and at the table. Over time, high sodium foods will likely taste too salty.

- **Eat more fresh foods.**
- **Eat more homemade foods.** Most fresh fruits and vegetables are naturally low in sodium. Also, fresh meat is lower in sodium than are luncheon meats, bacon, hot dogs, sausage and ham. Buy fresh and frozen poultry or meat that hasn't been injected with a sodium-containing solution. Look on the label or ask your butcher. Buy plain whole-grain rice and pasta instead of ones that have added seasonings. Make your own soups from scratch.
- **Use low-sodium products.** For those processed foods you do use, select the "low sodium" versions. Avoid products that have added seasonings. Read labels to be sure "salt substitutes" have no sodium.
- **Avoid high sodium condiments,** such as catsup, mustard, sauces, chili sauce, and salad dressings.
- **Cook using little to no added salt.** In most recipes, you can leave the salt out and not miss it.
- **Taste your food before salting it.** If you must salt it, try one shake of the salt shaker rather than two.
- **Rinse canned food.** This helps to remove some of the salt before you prepare it. Canned vegetables tend to be salty, as do canned meats and fish, such as sardines and tuna fish.
- **Season your food with herbs and spices.** However, you should avoid onion salt, garlic salt, celery salt, seasoned salt, meat tenderizer, and bouillon. Below are suggestions for herbs that go well with particular foods:

Asparagus	Lemon peel, thyme
Broccoli	Lemon juice, onion
Brussels sprouts	Lemon juice, mustard
Cabbage	Dill weed, caraway seeds, oregano, lemon juice, vinegar, onion, mustard, marjoram
Carrots	Marjoram, ginger, mint, mace, parsley, nutmeg, sage, unsalted butter, lemon peel, orange peel, thyme, cinnamon
Cauliflower	Rosemary, nutmeg, tarragon, mace
Celery	Dill weed, tarragon
Cucumbers	Rosemary, onion
Green beans	Basil, dill weed, thyme, curry powder, lemon juice, vinegar

Peas	Mint, onion, parsley, basil, chervil, marjoram, sage, rosemary
Potatoes	Bay leaves, chervil, dill weed, mint, parsley, rosemary, paprika, tarragon, mace, nutmeg, unsalted butter, chives
Spinach	Chervil, marjoram, mint, rosemary, mace, nutmeg, lemon, tarragon
Squash	Basil, saffron, ginger, mace, nutmeg, orange peel
Tomatoes	Basil, bay leaves, chervil, tarragon, curry powder, oregano, parsley, sage, cloves
Zucchini	Marjoram, mint, saffron, thyme
Eggs and cheese	Curry powder, marjoram, mace, parsley flakes, turmeric, basil, oregano, rosemary, garlic, mustard, mace, ginger, curry powder, allspice, lemon juice, pepper
Fish and shellfish	Basil, bay leaves, chervil, marjoram, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme, lemon peel, celery seed, cumin, saffron, savory, dry mustard
Poultry	Basil, saffron, bay leaves, sage, dill weed, savory, marjoram, tarragon, oregano, thyme, rosemary, paprika, curry powder, orange peel, cranberries, mushrooms
Pork	Cloves, garlic, ginger, mustard, nutmeg, paprika, sage, rosemary, savory, thyme, curry powder, oregano, apples

Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sodium/>