

## EAT LESS SODIUM: Simple Ways to Improve Your Diet

Eat less than 1,500 mg of sodium per day. If you're going to follow this nutrition guideline to protect your heart and your health, here are a few things you can do.

- ❑ **Read food labels.** Read the Nutrition Facts label on the food packages. Check the sodium content. Choose foods that have less than 100 mg of sodium per serving. Limit frozen dinners, pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups, and salad dressings.
- ❑ **Buy fresh or frozen.** When it comes to fruits and vegetables, fresh or frozen is best. Canned and processed foods typically contain higher levels of sodium. If you do buy canned foods, always rinse before preparing to remove excess sodium.
- ❑ **Avoid or limit fast food.** Many fast food chains serve burgers or fried foods that contain more than 1,000 mg of sodium in a single serving. Look up the nutritional information of menu items before you order.
- ❑ **Go lean.** If you eat meat, eat fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat rather than canned, smoked, or processed meats.
- ❑ **Make your own breakfast.** Instead of ordering breakfast on the go, make time to eat your morning meal at home. Choose low-sodium cereals or oatmeal. Enjoy fresh fruit or Greek yogurt.
- ❑ **Season with spices.** Skip the salt shaker. Season foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends. Or use a salt substitute.
- ❑ **Choose low-salt snacks.** Instead of pretzels and potato chips, try healthy snacks like unsalted nuts, dried fruit, low-fat or fat-free yogurt, plain popcorn, or fresh fruits and vegetables.

Top 25 foods that add the most sodium to your diet  
[tinyurl.com/yxrfunj7](https://tinyurl.com/yxrfunj7)

Follow the DASH Diet to eat less sodium  
[tinyurl.com/dc87g](https://tinyurl.com/dc87g)

## Four reasons to eat less sodium:

### 1. High blood pressure

What's your blood pressure? Less than 120/80 is normal. If it's higher than that, it's elevated, high, or a hypertensive crisis. About 1 in 3 adults has elevated or high blood pressure. It's a condition that forces the heart to work harder to circulate blood throughout the body. Over time, high blood pressure can damage your heart and arteries, lead to plaque build-up, and cause a heart attack or stroke.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. Kidney disease

Eating too much sodium can cause high blood pressure. Over time, high blood pressure can damage the small blood vessels in the kidneys. This increases the risk for kidney stones. It can also make you very tired and short of breath. Your body may retain water, and you might pee a lot.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Poor bone health







If you consume high levels of sodium, your risk for poor bone health goes up. Too much sodium in your diet can limit the amount of calcium your bones absorb. And that can make them weaker and more prone to injury.<sup>5</sup>

### 4. Eye disease

High blood pressure and a diet with too much sodium can damage the small blood vessels in the eyes. This condition limits the amount of oxygen your eyes receive. And it can lead to vision loss.<sup>6</sup>

## Where's the sodium?

Only a small amount of sodium occurs naturally in foods. Most is added during processing. Compare these foods:

1 cup, canned 354 mg		<b>Green Beans</b>	1 cup, fresh 1 mg	
1 cup, canned 428 mg		<b>Peas</b>	1 cup, frozen 8 mg	
1 cup, canned 571 mg		<b>Corn</b>	1 ear, corn cob 3 mg	

## References

1. He, F.J., et al. (2007). Blood pressure is the most important cause of death and disability in the world. *European Heart Journal Supplements*, 9:23-28. From: <https://tinyurl.com/yy3trv6o>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). Get the facts: Sodium and the dietary guidelines. From: <https://tinyurl.com/ycmphmxp>
3. Stamler, J. et al. (2018). Relation of dietary sodium (salt) to blood pressure and its possible modulation by other dietary factors. *Hypertension*, 71(4): 631-637. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y4see97d>
4. Arcand, J., et al. (2017). More evidence that salt increases blood pressure and risk of kidney disease from the Science of Salt: A regularly updated systematic review of salt and health outcomes (April–July 2016). *Journal of Clinical Hypertension*, 19:813-823. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y4lnyv9>
5. Ye, Z., et al. (2017). Association between essential hypertension and bone mineral density: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Oncotarget*, 8(40): 68916-68927. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y3wjcmg>
6. American Heart Association. (2017). How high blood pressure can lead to vision loss. From: <https://tinyurl.com/yybpaoxa>