

Wellness on the Web[®]

Sodium Restricted Diets

Indications: The diets presented in this article may be used in the treatment of certain cardiovascular (heart) diseases, renal (kidney) disease, toxemia of pregnancy, hypertension (high blood pressure), cirrhosis of the liver, steroid hormone therapy, and in many other disorders in which the body fails to eliminate sufficient sodium to maintain its proper state of sodium and fluid balance.

Description: A normal, everyday diet can contain between 2 and 7 gm of sodium on a daily basis. It is generally misleading to designate any diet as “salt free,” “salt poor,” “low sodium,” or “low salt.” *When a sodium restricted diet is prescribed it is usually designated in terms of milligrams of sodium, for example a 500 mg sodium diet, a 1000 mg sodium diet, or a 2000 mg. sodium diet.*

Most foods which contain large amounts of natural sodium are usually commercially processed foods to which sodium has been added. To reduce sodium in the diet these foods must either be eliminated or restricted in order to get a reduced sodium diet. It should also be kept in mind that some medications contain significant amounts of sodium and should be considered when planning a specifically desired level of a sodium intake.

The sodium restricted diet can be planned to vary between 250 mg and 2000 mg of sodium. A dietitian may adjust a diet to include or exclude certain foods based on the individual's specific needs.

Potassium-based salt substitute are available and may be prescribed by the physician for individuals requesting a salt substitute.

Adequacy: It should be noted, however, that in some 250 mg and 500 mg sodium diets, protein based foods are also limited. This often means that nutrients normally associated with these protein foods such as calcium, iron, niacin, and riboflavin may also be reduced and hence may lead to deficiencies if the individual refuses to include a variety of foods in his or her diet. In such cases supplements may be necessary to prevent malnutrition.

How to Eliminate Salt from Your Diet

Whether you were placed on a low salt diet by your doctor for high blood pressure, heart problems or swelling or you decided on your own to be on a low salt diet, this article will help you to plan and choose what you eat on a daily basis. Often we hear from our patients that it is difficult to be on a low salt diet and still enjoy eating out. The fact is you can do both be on a low salt diet and still dine out. True you will have to make some careful choices but it is neither impossible nor do you have to give up enjoying your dining experience.

Salt, or sodium chloride, is often abbreviated as NaCl. It is essential to life. It would be impossible to eat a NO salt diet. Everything you eat will have some salt in it. The goal then is not to entirely eliminate salt from everything you eat, rather to reduce the total amount of salt so that what you do eat has a minimum of salt beyond its normal complement of salt and what is healthy for you.

In order to avoid foods with excessive salt you will have to: 1) decrease eating foods high in salt content, 2) not add extra salt to your foods, 3) know which foods are high in salt, and 4) know which foods are low in salt so that you can eat more of them.

In this article we will 1) give you valuable hints on how to reduce salt, 2) we will provide you with several lists of foods and their salt contents. These are NOT an all inclusive list. That is they do not contain the salt content of every food you might eat, rather they provide information on the salt content of some of the more common foods you are likely to eat on a daily basis. If you need information about specific foods you will have to search out the answers for yourself.

Fresh Unprocessed Foods

While it may be a change in your eating and lifestyle habits fresh fruits and vegetables and most uncooked and unprocessed meats contain acceptable amounts of salt. It is not until they are prepared or cooked that salt is generally added. When eating out you will need to instruct your waiter or waitress to tell the chef to prepare and cook your foods without adding salt. You can also tell the waiter or waitress that you will generally be able to eat most freshly prepared foods if no salt is added. This will mean that by picking wisely you will be able to eat a lot of very good tasting foods.

Prepared and Processed Foods

By prepared and processed foods we usually mean foods that are canned, or packaged (other than fresh flash frozen foods). Prepared meats such as bologna, salami, hot dogs, franks, sausage, pates, dried meats such as jerky's, canned meats such as Spam, hash, soups (other than low salt soups), often have very high salt contents. They should be avoided. Fortunately most restaurants that prepare fresh foods do not use much processed foods. This may not be true of pizza with sausage, meat balls or pepperoni, fast food restaurants or hot dog or hamburger places.

Asking For What You Want and Getting It

Most people who dine out have problems in two regards: 1) they are unaware of which foods are most often made with or without the addition of large amounts of salt, and 2) they are often unaware that they can ask for and get the chef to specially cook their food without adding salt during the preparation process.

In the future when you are ordering do two things: 1) tell the waiter or waitress that you are on a low salt diet and 2) ask them to ask the chef not to add salt to your food during its preparation or cooking. You can also ask the waiter or waitress to let the chef know that you would like talk directly with him or her or the person in charge of the kitchen to let them know what you need or to ask them if any of the ingredients in the foods you are about to order are already high in salt.

While many people may feel it is a burden to the waiter or waitress to ask the chef to make sure their food is made without salt we assure you that it is not. Not only is it done all of the time but in any good restaurant the chef should already, as part of his or her training, learned to do this. Since the restaurant wants your business they will generally bend over backwards to accommodate your needs. If you frequent the restaurant often they will want your business and they will usually be happy to make sure you get exactly what you desire. Whether you frequent the restaurant or not if you get what you desire it is wise to give the waiter or waitress a little more of a tip than usual for their help in this matter.

Hints:

- Avoid processed foods and delicatessen type foods and pickled foods.
- Avoid foods such as canned soups, tomato juice, vegetables.
- Avoid prepared and frozen foods.
- Avoid salty snacks such as pretzels, crackers, commercial popcorn, nuts and chips.
- Avoid prepared meats, such as bacon, ham, sausages, and cold cuts.
- Avoid processed cheeses and cheese spreads, and most cheeses.
- Avoid salted or smoked fish such as canned tuna, sardines, anchovies, caviar, herring, salted or dried cod, and smoked salmon. Avoid prepared mustards, horseradish, catsups.
- Avoid soy sauce, bullion cubes, seasoning mixes, dried soups, and monosodium glutamate.

When dining out ask that no salt or monosodium glutamate be added to your food. Eliminate or cut down on salt when cooking at home. Use herbs or spices, lemon juice, garlic or onions instead for flavoring your foods. Try not to salt foods at the table and if necessary salt only to taste.

Salt Content of Selected Foods:

Meats:

Bacon	1 slice	75 mg.
Beef, veal	3 oz.	75 mg.
Bologna	1 slice	390 mg.
Chicken	3 oz.	75 mg.
Egg	1 whole	60 mg.
Fish, fresh	3 oz.	75 mg.
Frankfurter	1 frank	540 mg.
Ham, cured	3 oz.	675 mg.
Lamb, pork	3 oz.	75 mg.

Beans and Nuts:

Dry beans, peas	½ cup	15 mg.
Peanuts, salted	¼ cup	275 mg.
Peanuts, unsalted	¼ cup	2 mg.

Vegetables and Fruits:

Corn, cucumbers, green peppers, lima beans, onions, peas, potatoes, pumpkin, sweet

potato, tomato, egg plant	1 cup	5 mg.
Cabbage, lettuce, radishes, turnip	½ cup	15 mg.
Carrots, celery, spinach	½ cup	40 mg.
Most fruits	½ cup	2 mg.

Breads and Cereals:

Bran flakes	¾ cup	340 mg.
Corn flakes	1 cup	165 mg.
Oatmeal, cooked, salted	1 cup	520 mg.
Puffed wheat, puffed rice, shredded wheat	1 cup	1 mg.
Rice, cooked	½ cup	3 mg.
Wheat germ	¼ cup	5 mg.
Whole wheat bread	1 slice	170 mg.

Milk, Cheese And Dairy Products:

Low fat milk	1 cup	120 mg.
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Buttermilk	1 cup	225 mg.
Cheese-cheddar, Swiss, American	1 oz.	220 mg.
Cottage cheese, creamed	¼ cup	160 mg.
unsalted	¼ cup	30 mg.
Parmesan cheese	1 tbsp.	40 mg.
Low fat cheese	1 oz.	200 mg.

Miscellaneous Foods:

Catsup	1 tbsp.	200 mg.
Dill pickle	1 large	1928 mg.
Gelatin, plain	1 tbsp.	3 mg.
Gelatin, flavored (4-5 servings)	1 box	330 mg.
Green olive	1	155 mg.
Homemade soup, salted	1 cup	500 mg.
Margarine, salted	1 tbsp.	110 mg.
unsalted	1 tbsp.	1 mg.
Miso	1 tbsp.	500 mg.
Peanut butter, regular	1 tbsp.	18 mg.
Potato chips	10 chips	200 mg.
Salad dressing	1 tbsp.	200 mg.
Salt	¼ tsp.	575 mg.
Soy sauce	1 tbsp.	1300 mg.
Worcestershire sauce	1 tbsp.	315 mg.

Foods Low in Salt:

Whole grains and legumes (beans) prepared without salt.
Most fresh fruits and vegetables.

Flavoring Tips For A Low Sodium Diet

The following items, may be used for flavoring when cooking instead of salt or seasonings containing sodium chloride (salt). REMEMBER: A little bit of spice goes a long way! Be careful and do not over season your foods!

<u>Beef</u>	Savory*	Tarragon*	<u>Fish</u>
Basil*	Tarragon*	Thyme*	Basil*
Bay leaf*	Thyme*	Turmeric*	Bay leaf*
Caraway*	Tomato*††		Chervil*
Curry*			Curry*
Dill weed*	<u>Chicken</u>		Dill*
Dry mustard*	Basil*		Dry mustard
Garlic*	Cloves*		Green Peppers*
Grape jelly	Cranberries*		Lemon juice
Green Pepper*	Mace*		Marjoram*
Mace*	Mushrooms*††		Mushrooms*††
Marjoram*	Nutmeg*		Paprika*
Mushrooms*††	Oregano*		Pepper**
Nutmeg	Paprika		Tarragon*
Onion*	Parsley*		Tomato*††
Parsley*	Pineapple*		Turmeric*
Pepper**	Poultry Seasoning***		
Rosemary*	Sage*		
Sage*	Saffron*		

Pork

Applesauce
Basil*
Caraway*
Chives*
Cloves
Garlic*
Onion*
Rosemary*
Thyme*

Veal

Apricots*
Basil*
Bay leaf*
Currant jelly
Curry*
Ginger*
Marjoram*
Mushrooms*††
Oregano*
Paprika*

Lamb

Cloves*
Curry*
Dill weed*
Garlic*
Mace*
Mint or Mint jelly
Onion*
Oregano*
Parsley*
Pineapple*
Rosemary*
Tarragon*
Thyme*

Eggs

Chervil*
Curry*
Dill weed*
Dry mustard
Garlic*
Green Pepper Jelly
Mushrooms*††
Nutmeg*
Onion*
Paprika*
Parsley*
Rosemary*
Tarragon*

Vegetables

Basil*
Dill weed*
Garlic*
Ginger*
Lemon juice
Mace*
Marjoram*
Nutmeg*
Onion*
Pepper**
Tarragon*
Tomato*
Sugar or sugar substitute
Salad dressing
Vinegar

Desserts

Allspice*
Anise
Cinnamon*
Cloves*
Ginger*
Mace*
Nutmeg*
Vanilla extracts
Other extracts†

Spice Blend Recipe:

(Makes approximately ½ cup of seasoning mix):
5 tsp. Onion powder
2-½ tsp. Garlic powder
2-½ tsp. Paprika
2-½ tsp. Dry mustard
1-½ tsp. Thyme leaves (crushed)
½ tsp. White pepper
¼ tsp. Celery seed

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* Fresh, dried, seeds or powdered.

** White, black, chili- fresh, powdered or ground.

† Salt Free

†† Canned, Salt Free

Summary: There are four secrets that will help you.

1. Most non-processed fruits, vegetables and meats will not be excessively high in salt.
2. Most foods high in salt have been processed or salt has been added during the preparation or cooking process.
3. When you order you can ask the waiter or waitress to tell the chef to make your meals without adding any salt.
4. You can add a small amount of salt or salt substitute, which you can bring with you to the restaurant, once your food has been served.

High Sodium Foods

Salt (Table, Rock or Sea)
All Cheese Unless Low Sodium
All Luncheon Meats
Anchovies
Bacon And Bacon Fat
Baking Powder
Baking Soda
Beef Pastrami
Bologna
Bouillon Cubes
Buttermilk
Catsup
Caviar
Celery Salt
Chile Sauce
Chipped Beef Corned
Clams, Canned
Condensed Milk
Crab
Dried Cod
Evaporated Milk
Frozen Lima Beans
Garlic Salt
Ham
Herring
Instant Or Frozen Potatoes
Kidneys
Meat Sauces

Meat Extracts
Meat Tenderizers
Olives
Onion Salt
Oyster, Canned or Frozen Scallops
Pickles, Sweet And Dill Relishes
Pizza Pie
Potato Chips
Prepared Mustard
Pretzels
Processed Cheese
Roquefort Cheese
Salami
Salt Pork
Salted, Smoked and Canned Fish Smoked
Salmon
Salted Nuts
Salted Popcorn
Salted, Smoked and Canned Meats
Sardines Sauerkraut
Sausages
Shrimp, Canned
Soy Sauce
Sunflower Seeds
Wieners
Worcestershire Sauce