



# Spice It Up and Use Less Sodium

## Use More Spices and Less Salt

An important part of healthy eating is choosing foods that are low in salt (sodium chloride) and other forms of sodium. Using less sodium is key to keeping blood pressure at a healthy level.

Most Americans use more salt and sodium than they need. Some people, such as African Americans and the elderly, are especially sensitive to salt and sodium and should be particularly careful about how much they consume.

Most Americans should consume no more than 2.4 grams (2,400 milligrams) of sodium a day. That equals 6 grams (about 1 teaspoon) of table salt a day. For someone with high blood pressure, the doctor may advise less. The 6 grams includes *all* salt and sodium consumed, including that used in cooking and at the table.

Before trying salt substitutes, you should check with your doctor, especially if you have high blood pressure. These contain potassium chloride and may be harmful for those with certain medical conditions.

Box 9 offers some tips on how to choose and prepare foods that are low in salt and sodium.

box 9

### TIPS TO REDUCE SALT AND SODIUM

- Buy fresh, plain frozen, or canned “with no salt added” vegetables.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat, rather than canned or processed types.
- Use herbs, spices, and salt-free seasoning blends in cooking and at the table.
- Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereal without salt. Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have added salt.
- Choose “convenience” foods that are low in sodium. Cut back on frozen dinners, pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths, and salad dressings—these often have a lot of sodium.
- Rinse canned foods, such as tuna, to remove some sodium.
- When available, buy low- or reduced-sodium or no-salt-added versions of foods—see box 11 for guidance on how to use food labels.
- Choose ready-to-eat breakfast cereals that are low in sodium.



With herbs, spices, garlic, and onions, you can make your food spicy without salt and sodium. There's no reason why eating less sodium should make your food any less delicious! See box 10 for some great ideas on using spices.

box 10

#### TIPS FOR USING HERBS AND SPICES

HERBS AND SPICES	USE IN
Basil	Soups and salads, vegetables, fish, and meats
Cinnamon	Salads, vegetables, breads, and snacks
Chili Powder	Soups, salads, vegetables, and fish
Cloves	Soups, salads, and vegetables
Dill Weed and Dill Seed	Fish, soups, salads, and vegetables
Ginger	Soups, salads, vegetables, and meats
Marjoram	Soups, salads, vegetables, beef, fish, and chicken
Nutmeg	Vegetables, meats, and snacks
Oregano	Soups, salads, vegetables, meats, and snacks
Parsley	Salads, vegetables, fish, and meats
Rosemary	Salads, vegetables, fish, and meats
Sage	Soups, salads, vegetables, meats, and chicken
Thyme	Salads, vegetables, fish, and chicken

Experiment with these and other herbs and spices. To start, use small amounts to find out if you like them.

#### Shopping for Foods That Will Help You Lower Your Blood Pressure

By paying close attention to food labels when you shop, you can consume less sodium. Sodium is found naturally in many foods. But processed foods account for most of the salt and sodium that Americans consume. Processed foods that are high in salt include regular canned vegetables and soups, frozen dinners, lunchmeats, instant and ready-to-eat cereals, and salty chips and other snacks.

Use food labels to help you choose products that are low in sodium. Box 11 shows you how to read and compare food labels.

As you read food labels, you may be surprised that many foods contain sodium, including baking soda, soy sauce, monosodium glutamate (MSG), seasoned salts, and some antacids.



**COMPARE LABELS**

Food labels can help you choose items lower in sodium, as well as calories, saturated fat, total fat, and cholesterol. The label tells you:

FROZEN PEAS	
<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size: 1/2 cup	
Servings Per Container: about 3	
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>	
Calories: 60	Calories from Fat: 0
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	0%
<b>Sodium</b> 125mg	5%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 11g	4%
Dietary Fiber 6g	22%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
<hr/>	
Vitamin A 15%	Vitamin C 30%
Calcium 0%	Iron 6%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

**Amount per serving**

Nutrient amounts are provided for one serving. If you eat more or less than a serving, add or subtract amounts. For example, if you eat 1 cup of peas, you need to double the nutrient amounts on the label.

**Number of servings**

There may be more than one serving in the package, so be sure to check serving size.

**Nutrients**

You'll find the milligrams of sodium in one serving.

**Percent daily value**

Percent daily value helps you compare products and tells you if the food is high or low in sodium. Choose products with the lowest percent daily value for sodium.

CANNED PEAS	
<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size: 1/2 cup	
Servings Per Container: about 3	
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>	
Calories: 60	Calories from Fat: 0
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	0%
<b>Sodium</b> 380mg	16%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 12g	4%
Dietary Fiber 3g	14%
Sugars 4g	
Protein 4g	
<hr/>	
Vitamin A 6%	Vitamin C 10%
Calcium 2%	Iron 8%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet	

**? Which product is lower in sodium?**

*Answer:* The frozen peas. The canned peas have three times more sodium than the frozen peas.

**Easy on the Alcohol**

Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure. It also can harm the liver, brain, and heart. Alcoholic drinks also contain calories, which matters if you are trying to lose weight.

If you drink alcoholic beverages, drink only a moderate amount— one drink a day for women, two drinks a day for men.

What counts as a drink?

- 12 ounces of beer (regular or light, 150 calories),
- 5 ounces of wine (100 calories), or
- 1 1/2 ounces of 80-proof whiskey (100 calories).