

Sodium Reduction

High blood pressure (or hypertension) is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases (heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease) and accounts for approximately 18 percent of cardiovascular disease-related deaths. Taking measures to prevent high blood pressure is crucial to ensure your longevity and wellness.

Did you know?

- Nearly one in two Americans have high blood pressure.
- High blood pressure is one of the costliest health conditions and has an estimated national annual cost of \$131 billion.
- High blood pressure usually has no warning signs or symptoms, so many people don't realize they have it.

These facts and statistics show just how serious high blood pressure is. Most hypertension can be prevented by adopting healthy habits, which includes reducing sodium intake. With salt consumption playing a major role in heart disease, it's important to remember to look at the sodium level on nutrition food labels as well as the fat content to make sure you are eating foods that are truly heart healthy.

Tips for lowering sodium intake

Americans consume more sodium than is recommended by health experts. This fact is not so surprising when you review high levels of sodium in processed foods. One teaspoon of table salt contains approximately 2,000mg of sodium. Consuming high levels of sodium is a major contributor to high blood pressure, so it is important to lower the amount of sodium you consume. While most people know that they need to reduce the amount of sodium they eat, they are unsure of how to do so. Here are a few easy ways you can lower your salt intake:

- **Gradually reduce sodium use.** Slowly lower the amount of sodium consumed each day. By gradually reducing sodium intake, you allow your taste buds (and body) time to adjust to the way foods taste without high quantities of salt. This trains your body to crave foods that have minimal or no salt and allows you to reduce sodium consumption for the long haul.
- **Eat fresh foods.** Try to avoid processed foods as much as possible since most have high levels of sodium. By eating fresh foods, you can greatly lower the amount of sodium you consume while eating delicious healthy foods.

- **Opt for low-sodium products.** When purchasing processed and packaged food, pick the low-sodium options. Being labeled low-sodium means the food product can contain no more than 140mg of sodium.
- **Omit salt from recipes.** Many recipes call for salt as an ingredient even though it can be left out without compromising the integrity of the dish. By not cooking with salt, you can “salt to taste” when you are eating. This helps reduce the over-salting of foods. The only time you shouldn’t omit salt from a recipe is when baking. For most baked goods, salt is used as a leavening agent and not for flavoring.
- **Reduce the use of sodium-laden condiments.** Try to avoid condiments that have high levels of sodium such as soy sauce, ketchup, and steak sauce. Check the condiment labels to know how much sodium is in each serving.
- **User herbs and spices instead of salt.** To make meals flavorful, use herbs and spices instead of salt. By using herbs and spices, you are trying new flavors and still cutting down on sodium, while making a tasty dish.

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