

# Sodium (Salt) Guidelines

## Sodium (Salt)

Sodium (salt) is an essential nutrient your body needs.

Your body needs sodium for:

- fluid balance
- nerve function
- muscle strength.

Most people have too much sodium in their diet. Eating too many foods high in sodium can be harmful.

Too much sodium can cause high blood pressure. This puts you at a higher risk for heart disease and stroke.

If you have heart failure, kidney disease or liver disease, too much sodium can cause your body to retain (keep) water.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 recommends that Americans should reduce the amount of sodium they eat each day to 2,300 mg.

If you have kidney disease, diabetes, heart disease or high blood pressure, you should follow a low-sodium diet of 2,000 mg of sodium or less each day.

If you have heart failure, limit your sodium to 1,500 to 2,000 mg a day.

Talk with your health care provider about how much sodium is right for you.

## Foods High in Sodium

Sodium occurs naturally in many foods but can also be added to foods.

The following foods are high in sodium:

- canned foods (soups, vegetables, beans)
- processed foods (frozen dinners, boxed rice, cheese)
- snack foods (peanuts, pretzels, potato chips)
- salted or canned meats (bacon, beef jerky or cured and pickled items)
- condiments (ketchup, soy sauce, mustard, salad dressing)

## Foods Low in Sodium

Eating lower sodium foods will help your body function properly and keep you feeling your best.

The following foods are low in sodium:

- foods high in fiber (whole grains and fruit)
- fresh or frozen vegetables
- unprocessed foods
- herbs and spices to season foods instead of salt
- unsalted nuts
- home-made pizzas, burgers and soups.

**(over)**

## Tips to Cut Sodium From Your Diet

Follow these tips to cut back on your sodium intake.

- Choose foods that are low in sodium or reduced in sodium.
- Learn to read food labels so you can avoid foods that are high in sodium.
- Eat more fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables.
- Choose fresh meat over processed meat.
- Prepare more meals at home.
- Cook with herbs and spices instead of salt.
- Keep the salt shaker off the table while you eat.
- Choose frozen meals that have less than 600 milligrams of sodium per serving and more than 2 grams of fiber. Limit frozen meals to 2 to 3 times a week.

It may take a few weeks for your taste buds to adjust to eating less sodium. Before long, you will enjoy the taste of the food itself without the addition of sodium.