

Diet Guidelines for Heart Failure

Why is Extra Sodium (Salt) Harmful?

Sodium affects the fluid balance in your body. A diet high in sodium causes your body to hold, or retain, more water to balance your salt intake.

With heart failure, your heart can't pump as well as it once did. Extra water as a result of extra sodium increases the work of your heart as it pumps blood throughout your body.

Over time, this stress causes your heart to become weaker. This is why a diet high in sodium can be harmful.

Limit the amount of sodium you eat to 1,500 to 2,000 milligrams (mg) each day.

What are the Best Ways to Avoid Extra Fluid Build-up?

- Eliminate salt in your cooking.
- Remove the salt shaker from the kitchen.
- Learn to read food labels so you can avoid foods that are high in sodium.
- Use ice cubes or ice chips between meals.
- Add lemons or limes (or lemon or lime juice) to water or ice. The sour taste will help quench your thirst.

What Foods are High in Sodium?

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

What Foods are Better Choices Than Salty Foods?

- 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
- homemade pizzas, burgers and soups

What Else Can You Do for Your Heart Failure?

- Eat smaller, "mini" meals more often during the day.
- Plan time for physical activity most days of the week.
- If you smoke, ask your health care provider for ways to quit.