

Eating Less Salt

How much salt is too much?

People need to eat less salt for different reasons. Some people have high blood pressure. Others retain water and have swollen feet or water on their lungs. Some people should stop using salt. Other people should use less salt.

What about blood pressure?

A number of lifestyle changes can help reduce blood pressure. These include:

- eat less salt;
- start walking or walk more;
- lose weight if you are overweight;
- cut down or stop smoking;
- learn to relax; and
- work with your doctor to find the right blood pressure pills.

How much salt is right for me?

Talk to your doctor or a registered dietitian about how much salt you can use.

Ask things like:

- Do I really need to use less salt?
- Should I stop using salt when I cook?
- Should I stop eating packaged and processed foods?
- Should I cut salt out of my diet?



Here are some ways to eat less salt

At the table:

- Take your salt shaker off the table.
- Stop using all kinds of salt. This includes table salt, sea salt, garlic salt, onion salt, celery salt, lemon pepper, monosodium glutamate (MSG), soy sauce, teriyaki sauce.

HEALTHY
Eating
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Eating Less Salt

Here are some ways to eat less salt (cont'd)

When you are shopping:

- Buy fresh foods. Processed meat and canned food have salt in them. Choose fresh meat instead of processed meat. Buy fruits and vegetables fresh instead of canned.
- Buy unsalted foods. Choose unsalted crackers and nuts. Look for foods that are marked "salt reduced" or "low salt".
- Read the labels. Most packaged food has salt added. If salt or sodium is listed as the first, second or third ingredient it is probably too salty for you. If the % Daily Value (DV) for sodium on the Nutrition Facts table is 5% or less (120 mg or less), the food is low in sodium.

When you are cooking:

- Cook pasta, rice and potatoes without salt. When you bake cookies or muffins, use less salt than the recipe suggests.
- Cook with less or no salt. Try making soups, stews, casseroles and desserts with less salt. Bookstores and libraries have lots of low-salt cookbooks.

When you drink water, choose:

- Tap water, spring water or distilled water
- Bottled waters (check the label)
(Water treated with softeners is salty. There is also sodium in club soda.)

How can I add more taste without salt?

Use spices and herbs for extra flavour:

- Use lots of onions, garlic, ginger, parsley and other fresh herbs.
- Sprinkle lemon juice, lime juice or vinegar on vegetables, fish or chicken.
- Make your own salad dressings from oil, vinegar, herbs and spices.
- Use wine to flavour stews.



TIP

People with high blood pressure may need to make a number of lifestyle changes.

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How can I add more taste without salt? (cont'd)

Here is a low salt spice mix you can make.

Put it in your salt shaker instead of salt.

Mix together:

1 tablespoon each of:

- dried mustard
- paprika
- onion powder
- pepper

1 teaspoon each of:

- basil
- thyme



What foods should I avoid?

Some of the things on this list might be your favourite foods. You can eat them, but don't eat too much.

Try to have no more than one salty food at a meal.

Packaged foods and instant foods.

These include: mixes; canned food; packaged food; instant food; and frozen dinners.

Deli meats.

Processed foods.

These include: canned meats and fish; processed cheese or cheese spreads; smoked fish and kippers; and sausages.

Pickled foods.

TIP

Check the label. Many processed foods contain a lot of salt.

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What foods should I avoid? (cont'd)

Condiments or gravies.

These include: ketchup or steak sauce; mustard, relish or horseradish; Worcestershire sauce or soy sauce; salad dressings; packaged gravy or sauces; and bouillon.

Snack foods.

These include: potato chips, pretzels and salted crackers; salted nuts or sunflower seeds; and microwave popcorn.

Some desserts.

For example, commercial pies and desserts; and pudding mixes.

Some drinks.

These include: tomato juice and vegetable juice; sports drinks; soda water; and some mineral waters.



What about salt substitutes?

Look for salt substitutes that are made from herbs, spices and citrus peel. Some salt substitutes are made of potassium instead of sodium. If you have kidney disease or you are taking blood pressure pills you may not be able to use these. Ask your doctor if these salt substitutes are safe for you.



TIP
Some salt substitutes are made of potassium instead of sodium.