

# Heart-healthy eating with less salt

Follow these 3 steps to get started on eating heart-healthy foods with less salt.

## Step 1.

### Learn how salt (sodium) impacts your heart

Sodium is another word for salt. Too much salt may lead to high blood pressure, which can raise your risk for heart disease. Americans age 2 and older eat an average of 3,436 mg of sodium a day. If you are 51 or older or have high blood pressure, you should not eat more than 1,500 mg or about 2/3 teaspoon of salt a day.

Blood pressure can be controlled. By eating less salt, you may begin to reduce your blood pressure and risk for heart disease within a few weeks. Think about how much salt you eat and write down any questions you may have for your healthcare provider.

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## Step 2.

### Know how much salt you are eating

All US-packaged foods and beverages have a food label called Nutrition Facts. Nutrition Facts tells you how much sodium is in the foods you buy. Learning to read food labels can help you make lower-salt food choices.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	<b>18%</b>
Saturated Fat 3g	<b>15%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 3g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg	<b>10%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 470mg	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	<b>10%</b>
Dietary Fiber 1g	<b>4%</b>
Sugars 5g	
<b>Protein</b> 5g	
Vitamin A	<b>4%</b>
Vitamin C	<b>2%</b>
Calcium	<b>20%</b>
Iron	<b>4%</b>

More than 20% is high in sodium  
Less than 5% is low in sodium.

The % Daily Value tells you how much of a nutrient you need each day is in 1 serving of that food. It is based on a daily diet of 2,000 calories.

### Step 3.

#### Swap high-sodium foods with healthier choices

Too much sodium in your diet can cause your body to retain fluids. Retaining this fluid can raise your blood pressure. Cutting down on salt can help you lower your blood pressure.

#### Check the tips you would most likely use to cut down on salt:

- Compare food labels at the store and choose the foods with the least amount of salt (sodium)
- Choose low- or no-salt options for sauces and seasonings
- Eat fewer lunch meats and hot dogs, which are high in salt
- Stop adding salt when you cook
- Cook with unsalted or low-sodium broth or low-salt bouillon cubes
- Season your food with lemon juice, vinegar, herbs, and spices
- Pick the no-salt version of canned and frozen vegetables and fruits
- Snack on fruit and raw vegetables instead of salty chips or salted nuts
- Taste your food before you add salt
- Take the salt shaker off the table where you eat

Now think about your own diet. Write down things that you may eat that have a lot of salt and work with your healthcare provider to find healthy alternatives.

High-salt (High-sodium) foods I eat	Low-sodium foods I can swap them with
Example: Canned green beans	Example: Frozen, unsalted green beans

#### Ten top sources of sodium in today's diet

- Bread and rolls
- Cold cuts and cured meats
- Pizza
- Some commercial poultry and ham products — check the label for added sodium
- Canned soups
- Sandwiches
- Cheese
- Pasta dishes
- Meat dishes
- Snacks

**Talk with your healthcare provider or dietitian about creating a lower-salt daily food plan that works best for you.**

