

Know the facts

Nutrition & Fitness



Salt

Sodium is essential in small amounts

Our bodies need some sodium to function properly, specifically to help maintain nerve function, the right balance of fluids in the body and to influence the contraction and relaxation of muscles.

The kidneys naturally balance the amount of sodium stored in the body for optimal health. When sodium levels are low, the kidneys essentially hold on to the sodium but when the levels are high, the kidneys excrete the excess in urine.

If for some reason the kidneys can't eliminate enough sodium, the sodium starts to accumulate in our blood. Because sodium attracts and holds water, our blood volume increases. Increased blood volume makes the heart work harder circulating the blood which increases pressure in our arteries. Certain bodies may be more sensitive to the effects of sodium than others, so they may retain it more easily.

How to cut back gradually

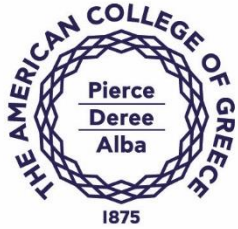
Your taste for salt is acquired, so you can learn to enjoy less. Decrease your use of salt gradually and your taste buds will adjust. After a few weeks of cutting back on salt, you probably won't miss it, and some foods may even taste too salty. Start by using no more than 1/4 teaspoon of salt daily — at the table and in cooking. Then throw away the salt shaker. As you use less salt, your preference for it diminishes, allowing you to enjoy the taste of the food itself, with heart-healthy benefits.

Use salt substitutes wisely. Some salt substitutes or light salts contain a mixture of table salt and other compounds. To achieve that familiar salty taste, you may use too much of the substitute — and get too much sodium. Also, many salt substitutes contain potassium chloride. Although potassium can lessen some of the problems from excess sodium, too much potassium can be harmful if you have kidney problems or if you're taking medications for congestive heart failure or high blood pressure that cause potassium retention.



Tips:

- Eat more fresh foods. Most fresh fruits and vegetables are naturally low in sodium. Also, fresh meat is lower in sodium than luncheon meat, bacon, hot dogs, sausage and ham. Buy fresh and frozen poultry or meat that hasn't been injected with a sodium-containing solution. Look on the label or ask your butcher. Buy plain whole-grain rice and pasta instead of ones that have added seasonings. Make your own spaghetti sauces and soups from scratch. Buy unsalted nuts.
- Opt for low-sodium products. If you do buy processed foods, choose those that are labeled "low sodium."
- Remove salt from recipes whenever possible. You can leave out the salt in many recipes, including casseroles, stews and other main dishes that you cook. Baked goods are generally an exception since leaving out the salt could affect the quality and taste. Use cookbooks that focus on lowering risks of high blood pressure and heart disease to help guide you to sparing the salt without spoiling taste or quality.
- Limit use of sodium-laden condiments. Soy sauce, salad dressings, sauces, dips, ketchup, mustard and relish all contain sodium. If you ask, most restaurants are willing to prepare your food with the sauce on the side.
- Use herbs, spices and other flavorings to enhance foods. Use fresh or dried herbs, spices, zest from citrus fruit, and lemon and fruit juices to jazz up your meals. And remember that sea salt has about the same amount of sodium as table salt.



Know the facts

Nutrition & Fitness



How much should you eat?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend less than 2,300 mg of Sodium/day.

American Heart Association recommends less than 1,500mg of Sodium/day

Health risks of eating too much salt

- Hypertension
- Osteoporosis
- Kidney disorders
- Dehydration and
- Digestive diseases
- Electrolyte and hormone imbalance

Who needs to be careful

- People ages 51 and older
- People with high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease.

Eating less sodium can help lower blood pressure in some individuals.

Track Your Sodium Intake

Unsure of how much sodium you're getting every day? Keep a daily tally of the foods you eat and drink. Then calculate how much sodium is in each. The average person takes in 3,400 milligrams of sodium each day, well above the recommended limit for good health.

Read labels

Sodium-free: Less than 5 milligrams of sodium per serving

Very low-sodium: 35 milligrams or less per serving

Low-sodium: Less than 140 milligrams per serving

Reduced sodium: Sodium level reduced by 25%

Unsalted, no salt added, or without added salt: Made without the salt that's normally used, but still contains the sodium that's a natural part of the food itself.





Different names for salt

When you're scanning a food label, don't just look for the word "salt." You will be surprised to see how many different names are simply salt. For example:

- sodium alginate
- sodium bicarbonate (baking soda)
- sodium benzoate
- sodium caseinate
- sodium chloride
- sodium citrate
- sodium hydroxide
- sodium sacchari
- sodium sulfite
- disodium phosphate
- monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- trisodium phosphate
- Na





Salt: Now you see it now you don't

The Obvious Offenders

- Potato chips
- Cheese puffs
- Pretzels
- Olives
- Cheese

The Unobvious Offenders

- Ready-to-eat cereals
- Frozen/processed & precooked meals
- Vegetable juices
- Canned vegetables
- Packaged deli meats
- Marinades and flavorings
- Spaghetti sauce
- Nuts
- Condiments (ketchup, capers, etc)
- Some medications

