

## Cutting the Salt

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How do we get so much salt? Salt is everywhere. We get most of our salt from eating out and eating processed foods. Believe it or not, our taste for salt is acquired. If you cut down slowly, you can learn to like less salt. Once you begin to enjoy the natural taste of food, you will wonder how you ever ate so much salt before.

Nutrition labels tell you how much sodium a food contains. Sodium is one of the chemicals that makes up salt. We only need about 250 – 500 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day. Many of us get 10 times that amount or more.

On the label, there are three ways to tell if a food is low in sodium. One way is to look for the words “sodium free” or “low sodium.” Be careful though about “reduced sodium.” This term means the food has at least 25% less sodium than the usual product. But if the original food is very high in sodium, the reduced product may still have a lot.

Another way is to just look on the label for total milligrams of sodium or the Daily Value. The Daily Value gives you a percentage of the total day’s recommended sodium intake of 2400 milligrams. If the Daily Value is less than 5%, then the food is low in sodium. If it is between 10 and 19%, it is moderately high and if it is over 20% it is very high. To control your sodium intake, choose more of the foods with less than 10% of the Daily Value. If you eat a high sodium food, balance it out with a low sodium food.

## How to cut back on salt

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- Take the salt shaker off the table.
- Cook pasta, noodles, rice, vegetables and hot cereals in unsalted water.
- Season with lemon juice or a small amount of table wine. Do not use cooking wine – it has salt.
- Rinse canned vegetables for one minute in a colander, then cook in fresh water.
- Leave the salt out of quick breads.
- Cut the salt in recipes by  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$ .
- Use frozen vegetables without salt instead of canned vegetables.
- Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon each of dried herbs or spices to each recipe serving four or use  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon fresh herb.
- Prepare soups, stews, salads and sauces a day ahead without salt. Let the natural flavors blend.

(over, please.)

## Replace the salt

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Many herbs and spices enhance flavors without added salt. Here are a few to try:

**Cayenne:** beef, poultry, seafood, soups, stews, sauces, most vegetables

**Tarragon:** eggs, poultry, fish, salad dressing, cream soups and sauces, potatoes

**Ginger:** pork, poultry, Chinese dishes, fruit salads

**Thyme:** meat, fish, poultry, fish soups or stews, vegetable salads and salad dressing

**Nutmeg:** poultry, stews, creamed dishes, fruit, all vegetables except the cabbage family

**Basil:** poultry, fish, meat, tomato dishes, vegetables, pasta, soups, vegetable salads

## In general, processed food tends to be higher in sodium.

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Here are some examples to compare:

- 1/2 cup canned green beans ..... 178 mg
- 1/2 cup fresh cooked green beans ..... 2 mg
- 1 oz. American processed cheese ..... 460 mg
- 1 oz. cheddar cheese ..... 176 mg
- 1 small fast food hamburger ..... 500 mg
- 1 homemade hamburger ..... 270 mg
- 1 oz. turkey lunch meat ..... 301 mg
- 1 oz. roast fresh turkey ..... 20 mg

*Information from the University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University,  
The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Counties of the State Cooperating.*