

# Spice it up without salt

Too much salt (also called sodium) causes high blood pressure in some people. High blood pressure is bad for your heart. Most of the salt that Americans eat comes from the salt that is added to processed and restaurant food. To keep your heart healthy and your blood pressure normal, use the following tips.

## Check food labels for salt or sodium.

- One level teaspoon of salt is about 2,300 milligrams of sodium. Try not to go over this amount with all your foods in one day – that includes the salt already in processed foods as well as the salt you add to the food you cook. Certain groups of people should not eat more than 1,500 milligrams of sodium in one day. Those groups include people with hypertension (high blood pressure), African Americans, and middle age and older adults.\*
- Look for foods that have less than 300 milligrams of sodium in a serving (see Added Salt Adds Up! on back page.)
- A food is pretty high in salt if a serving has over 400 milligrams of sodium.
- Look for foods that say no salt added or low or reduced sodium.

## Watch out for salty foods.

- Boxed dinners (like macaroni and cheese or Hamburger Helper®), canned soups and vegetables, frozen vegetables with sauces, and cheese sauces are often high in salt (sodium). Look for foods that have less sodium.
- If you eat frozen dinners, buy low-salt or low-sodium meals or have regular frozen dinners no more than once a week. Better still, make your own frozen dinners – cook larger amounts of food and freeze the extra in containers to reheat later. (You'll save money too!)

## Try herbs and spices

Herbs and spices can be used to bring out the flavor in your foods without adding salt.

- For beef: Use sage, garlic, thyme, pepper or turmeric.
- For chicken: Use paprika, rosemary, curry, or garlic or onion powder.
- For pork: Use thyme, basil, sage, pepper, curry, or garlic or onion powder.
- For fish: Use lemon or lime juice, dill, or garlic or onion powder.

Try Mrs. Dash® or make your own herb or spice mixture. Keep it in a shaker and use when cooking or at the table.

Be careful! Some seasonings and sauces have lots of salt: garlic and onion salts, poultry seasoning, soy sauce, barbecue sauce, ketchup, some hot sauces, and spaghetti and tomato sauces.



- Go easy on hot dogs, lunch meats, and cured meats like bacon, ham, sausage, and beef sticks.
- Don't overdo fast foods and salty chips and snacks. (These may also have a lot of trans fats.)
- Choose carefully at restaurants – even “healthy” menu items often have lots of salt.

### Break the salt shaker habit.

- All the salt you have in one day should fit in one level teaspoon. Remember that most of your salt is already in the food you eat, so only add a very small amount.
- Taste your food first, before adding salt.
- If a recipe calls for salt, add less than half the amount.
- Keep the salt shaker away from where you cook and eat.



### Added salt adds up!

Watch out for the salt in snack and convenience foods. Compare the salt (sodium) in a baked potato versus one serving of potato chips.

Food/Amount	Calories	Salt (Sodium)	Saturated Fat
1/2 baked potato	60	2.5 mg	0 mg
20 potato chips	150	333 mg	2 g

*\* Recommendations from the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, “Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake in the United States,” 2010.*

*Adapted from “A New Leaf...Choices for Healthy Living,” University of North Carolina at Chappel Hill, ©2007.*



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