

How to Reduce Salt

For how long do I need to reduce my salt

Your need for salt can change. You may have needed a low salt diet at some time in the past. For example, if you were in hospital and had swelling in your legs and feet, or you had water on your lungs. Now that you are home you may no longer need such a low salt diet. Perhaps all you need to do is put less salt on your food.

You may be surprised to learn that for many people their blood pressure does not go down when they go on a low salt diet. For most people, the following changes will bring down blood pressure more than a low salt diet:

- walking
- losing weight (if you are overweight)
- reducing or stopping smoking
- learning to relax, and
- the right high blood pressure pills

Ask your doctor if you really need to reduce your salt, and if so how much.

Read on if you do need to reduce your salt.



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- **Don't add salt at the table.** Take your salt shaker off the table.
- **Count these as salt:** table salt, sea salt, garlic salt, onion salt, celery salt, lemon pepper, monosodium glutamate (MSG), soy sauce, teriyaki sauce, Accent, Vege-Sal, Nature's Seasons, Herbamore, Savorite, Spike, Lite salt and Half Salt.
- **Buy fresh foods when you shop.** For example, buy fresh meat instead of processed meat, and buy fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables instead of canned.
- **Use less salt in cooking.** Try making pasta, rice and potatoes without any salt at all. Reduce the salt in recipes such as in cookies or muffins.
- **Home made meals can be made with less or no salt.** For example, home made soups, stews, casseroles and desserts. There are many low-salt cookbooks in book-stores and libraries.
- **Buy unsalted foods** such as crackers with unsalted tops or unsalted nuts. Look for food marked as "salt reduced" or "low salt".

- **To reduce salt from canned salted foods** (for example canned vegetables or canned tuna fish), rinse them under water.
- **Read the labels on packaged foods.** Salt is made of sodium chloride. Salt or sodium is added to most food products. The food is probably too salty for you if salt (or sodium) is the ingredient listed first, second or third.
- **Choose restaurants that will prepare food without salt.**
- **Some medications have salt:** Check labels of medication for salt or sodium. For example, fizzy pills such as Eno, and some laxatives and antacids have lots of sodium. Check with the pharmacist. Don't use baking soda as an antacid. It is high in sodium.
- **Water treated by a water softener is salty.** Instead choose regular or distilled water. Perrier or Silvan bottled water have little salt.

Limit the following salty food

Some of the foods listed may be your favourite foods. You can choose them but it is wise to limit your portions. Also, try not to have more than one salty choice at a meal.

- **salty convenience foods such as:** macaroni and cheese Kraft Dinner, canned spaghetti or canned stew, packaged rice, frozen dinners, pizza mixes and Hamburger Helper
- “instant” food products such as instant cooked cereals
- bacon, salt pork, ham, sausages, cold cuts (bologna or salami), liverwurst, canned meats (such as corned beef or Spam), processed cheese, cheese spreads (such as Cheez Whiz or Velveeta), pickled eggs, smoked fish and kippers, canned sardines, canned tuna or salmon
- ketchup, prepared mustard and steak sauce, horseradish, relish or Worcestershire sauce
- commercial salad dressings
- pickled vegetables such as sauerkraut, dill pickles, olives, pickled beets

- gravies or sauces made from commercial bases or mixes
- salted crackers, potato chips (and bought chip dips), tacos or pretzels, salted nuts or sunflower seeds, or microwave popcorn
- meat extracts such as bouillon, OXO, Bovril, dried soup mixes and regular canned soups
- commercial pies, desserts and pudding mixes
- yeast extracts such as Marmite or Vegemite
- tomato juice or V-8 juice
- soda water, Gatorade and some mineral waters (check the labels)
- **salty foods from restaurants such as:** McDonald's, Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken, pizza restaurants and Chinese food restaurants.

Salt substitutes

Salt substitutes include Co-Salt, No Salt, Nu-Salt, Neocurtasal, K-salt, Adolph's, Lawry's or Diamond Crystal Salt Substitute. These are made of potassium instead of sodium. Do not use one of these if you have kidney disease or if you are on a blood pressure pill that holds potassium in your body, such as captopril. **Ask your doctor if salt substitutes are safe for you to use.**

Use spices and herbs for extra flavour

- Use lots of onions, garlic, ginger, parsley and other fresh herbs.
- Sprinkle lemon or 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.
- Instead of salt you could use spices such as:
 - pepper
 - garlic powder
 - celery seed
 - dry mustard powder
 - curry powder
 - dried dill
- You can buy salt-free spice mixes to add to your foods, such as:
 - Mrs Dash
 - Lawry's Natural Choice
 - Nile Spice
 - Vegit
- Try this low salt spice mix:
Mix together the following spices and place in a salt shaker.
 - 1 tablespoon each of:
 - dried mustard
 - paprika
 - garlic powder
 - onion powder
 - pepper
 - 1 teaspoon each of:
 - basil
 - thyme