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Tips to reduce sodium in your diet

Most people know that too much sodium in their diet, usually in the form of table salt, can contribute to such health problems as high blood pressure.

Over 70 percent of the salt consumed daily is in processed, packaged foods and in restaurant meals. Even foods considered healthy, such as salads, can contain roughly half a day's allotment of sodium.

Recommended daily sodium intake is less than 2,300 mg.

Consumer Reports suggests the following ways to reduce salt intake without sacrificing taste:

Cut back gradually to allow your taste buds time to adjust.

Understand labels. "Low sodium" means 140 mg or less per serving. "No salt added" means salt wasn't added during processing, but some foods naturally contain sodium.

"Reduced sodium" means there is 25 percent less salt than in the regular version of that product, but that can still be a lot of sodium.

Compare packaged foods. One version of a food product can have almost twice the sodium of a similar food product.

Increase potassium in your diet to reduce the effects of sodium. Good sources of potassium include fresh fruits and vegetables, beans, whole grains, dairy, fish and lean meats.

Choose stock instead of broth. Rinse canned vegetables and beans, which can remove up to 40 percent of the sodium.

Don't salt your meal at a restaurant until you've tasted it. Most restaurant food is heavily salted when served. Ask for sauces and dressings on the side and use sparingly.

Flavor foods with herbs and spices. If you want the taste of salt, sprinkle on a little before eating.



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