Guidelines for a Low Sodium Diet

General Tips for Reducing Sodium Intake

If your doctor recommends that you reduce your sodium intake, here are some general guidelines for cutting down the amount of salt in your diet.

- Special foods are not required for this diet. Eliminating salty foods from your diet and reducing the amount of salt used in cooking are important steps.
- Many salt-free or reduced-salt products are available. You may choose low-sodium products to replace foods which are not allowed.
  - Salt substitutes may be used with your doctor's permission.
- Be creative and season your food with spices, herbs, lemons, oranges, wine and Tabasco sauce. Move the salt shaker off the table.
- Read ingredient labels to identify foods high in sodium. High-sodium food additives include salt, baking powder, brine or other items that say "sodium," such as monosodium glutamate (MSG).
- Eat more home-cooked meals. Foods cooked from scratch are naturally lower in sodium, since you are in control of how much salt is added.
  - Avoid softened water for cooking and drinking since it contains added salt.
  - Avoid medications that contain sodium, such as alka seltzer and bromo seltzer.
- For more information on specific foods, or if you want to actually calculate your daily sodium intake, you might consider reading food labels or use a sodium reference guide.

Meats, Poultry, Fish, Legumes, Eggs and Nuts

High-Sodium Foods:

- Smoked, cured, salted or canned meat, fish or poultry including bacon, cold cuts, ham, frankfurters, sausage, sardines, caviar and anchovies
  - Frozen breaded meats and dinners, such as burritos and pizza
    - Canned entrees, such as ravioli, spam and chili
    - Salted nuts

Low-Sodium Alternatives:

- Any fresh or frozen beef, lamb, pork, poultry and fish
  - Eggs and egg substitutes
• Low-sodium peanut butter
• Dry peas and beans (not canned)
• Low-sodium canned fish
• Drained, water or oil packed canned fish or poultry

**Dairy Products**

**High-Sodium Foods:**

• Buttermilk
• Regular and processed cheese, cheese spreads and sauces
  • Cottage cheese

**Low-Sodium Alternatives:**

• Milk, yogurt, ice cream and ice milk
• Low-sodium cheeses, cream cheese, ricotta cheese and mozzarella

**Breads, Grains and Cereals**

**High-Sodium Foods:**

• Bread and rolls with salted tops
• Quick breads, self-rising flour, biscuit, pancake and waffle mixes
  • Pizza, croutons and salted crackers
• Prepackaged, processed mixes for potatoes, rice, pasta and stuffing

**Low-Sodium Alternatives:**

• Breads, bagels and rolls without salted tops
  • Muffins and most ready-to-eat cereals
• All rice and pasta, but do not to add salt when cooking
  • Corn and flour tortillas and noodles
  • Low-sodium crackers and breadsticks
  • Unsalted popcorn, chips and pretzels

**Vegetables and Fruits**

**High-Sodium Foods:**

• Regular canned vegetables and vegetable juices
• Olives, pickles, sauerkraut and other pickled vegetables
  • Vegetables made with ham, bacon or salted pork
• Packaged mixes, such as scalloped or au gratin potatoes, frozen hash browns and Tater Tots
  • Commercially prepared pasta and tomato sauces
Low-Sodium Alternatives:

- Fresh and frozen vegetables without sauces
- Low-sodium canned vegetables, sauces and juices
- Fresh potatoes, frozen French fries and instant mashed potatoes
  - Low-salt tomato or V-8 juice.
  - Most fresh, frozen and canned fruit

Soups

High-Sodium Foods:

- Regular canned and dehydrated soup, broth and bouillon

Low-Sodium Alternatives:

- Low-sodium canned and dehydrated soups, broth and bouillon
  - Homemade soups without added salt

Fats, Desserts and Sweets

High-Sodium Foods:

- Bottled salad dressings, regular salad dressing with bacon bits
  - Salted butter or margarine
  - Instant pudding and cake

Low-Sodium Alternatives:

- Unsalted butter or margarine
- Vegetable oils and sodium-free salad dressings
  - All desserts made without salt