

District of Columbia Department of Health

What You Need to Know About Sodium/Salt Reduction

What is Sodium/Salt?

Why is Sodium Reduction Important?

- Sodium in moderation helps your body balance the level of fluid inside and outside your cells.
- An increased amount of sodium in your body will cause your body to hold excess fluid. Your heart has to overwork to pump this added fluid.
- Another name for sodium is **Salt, Sodium Chloride, Sodium Benzoate, or MSG.**
- Sodium can be found in most processed foods and accounts for most of the salt consumed.
- Blood Pressure can be lowered by reducing the intake of sodium/salt.

What Can I do to Reduce Sodium Intake?

- Always check food labels to see how much sodium you are having in a meal. It is recommended to consume **less than 2,400 milligrams** of sodium a day.
- Avoid canned items or processed meat such as tuna, canned beans or canned chicken. If you do have them, rinse canned food to remove some of the sodium. Instead, use fresh poultry, fish and lean meat.
- Choose canned items that are **plain** or **“with no salt added.”**
- Avoid instant or flavored rice, pasta and cereals. Use minimal amount of salt when cooking these items.
- Cut back on frozen dinners, pizza, and packaged foods. These items tend to have more sodium.
- Stock up on **low, reduced-sodium, or no-salt-added** versions of food.
- Use salt-free seasoning blends and herbs in place of regular salt to reduce sodium.

Facts on Sodium/Salt

- It is recommended to have **less than 2,400 milligrams** of sodium a day. 2,400 milligrams equals 6 grams or 1 teaspoon.
- 75% of sodium in the diet comes from sodium added to processed foods and beverages.
- Sodium may be in some of the foods you least expect it to be in, such as candy, frozen pizza, soups, frozen dinners, and beverages. Be mindful and **CHECK LABELS FIRST!**
- There are many different kinds of salt, such as Kosher Salt, Sea Salt, Grey Salt- watch the intake of these as well.
- Sodium reduction in your diet can lower your blood pressure.
- Try to limit your intake of fast foods as these foods contain high levels of sodium.

What Are Some Important Questions to Ask My Doctor?

- What is my blood pressure reading?
- What blood pressure range should I be aiming for and when do I need to contact a health care professional?
- How can I improve my diet?
- What is a recommended healthy eating plan I can use to reduce my sodium intake?
- What types of foods should I avoid when watching my sodium intake?



For more information, contact the
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