



Eating Less Sodium

Sodium is a mineral that the body needs in small amounts. Because sodium is found in table salt, most people eat far more sodium than they need. When sodium intake is too high, it can increase thirst and cause the body to retain fluid. To avoid these side effects, people with kidney disease are often told to eat less sodium. The tips on this sheet can show you how.

SHOPPING FOR FOOD

Unlike canned and processed foods, fresh foods have no added salt. Because of this, fresh vegetables, fruits, and meats are better for you. Keep the following thoughts in mind when you're food shopping:

- Choose fresh foods when you can
- Read food labels before you buy packaged foods. Check the label's nutrition facts for sodium amounts. Also find out the number of servings per package.
- Try to pick packaged foods with a sodium content of 140mg (milligrams) or less per serving.
- Do not choose foods with a sodium content of over 400mg per serving.

SEASON INSTEAD OF SALT

Use herbs and spices to flavor food without adding sodium. Try the seasonings and foods listed below:

- Basil: tomatoes, squash, eggplant, soups, fish pizza
- Curry: soups, rice lentils, chicken, yogurt dips
- Dill: beets, cucumbers, green beans, potatoes
- Garlic: salsa, sauces, vegetables, meats, fish
- Ginger: carrots, chicken, cooked fruit, white sauces
- Lemon: asparagus, artichokes, broccoli, spinach, fish
- Mint: cold soups, salads, fruit dishes
- Oregano: eggplant, tomatoes, chicken, salads, sauces
- Thyme: chicken, fish, lean meats, soups, stews

Do not use seasoning salt or salt substitutes. They may contain sodium or potassium (another mineral people with kidney disease are often told to limit).

SEVEN STEPS TO USING LESS SALT

1. Take the salt shaker off the table.
2. Avoid the use of salt in cooking.
3. Eat fewer meals at fast-food restaurants.
4. Eat fewer high-sodium foods, such as canned soups and vegetables, lunch meat and cheese.
5. Know the major sources of sodium:
 - Salt added in cooking
 - Salt added at the table
 - Salt added by the manufacturer
6. Learn to place foods that you eat into one of the following categories, according to their sodium content:
 - Very high (for example, pickles and olives)
 - High (for example, lunch meats and frankfurters)
 - Moderate (for example, ready-to-eat cereals)
 - Low (for example, fresh fruits and vegetables)
7. Check all medicines and food additives for their sodium content.