

Topic 8: How to Reduce Your Salt Intake

Salt, also known as sodium, is an important mineral needed for many body functions. Salt also helps improve the taste and texture of food, salt also acts as a preservative. Unfortunately, with the rise of processed, packaged and convenience foods, and dining out more often, Americans are eating way too much salt. Too much salt can lead to heart diseases: high blood pressure, injured blood vessels, clogged arteries, heart attacks and stroke.

Most of the sodium in the American diet comes from packaged foods and restaurant foods. The American Heart Association recommends less than 2000mg of sodium per day. Many of our popular foods contain more than 1000mg of sodium per serving!

The top 5 foods that add the most salt to our diet:

1. Sandwich meats (cold cuts, cured meats)
2. Pizza (frozen and restaurant)
3. Soup (canned and restaurant)
4. Bread and rolls (grocery store and restaurant)
5. Chicken products (injected with salt solutions)

Some packaged foods may not taste salty, so it is important to read the Nutrition Facts label as well as the ingredients. By reading the ingredients list, you will see that salt has many different names: sodium bicarbonate (baking soda), MSG (monosodium glutamate), Himalayan pink salt, kosher salt, and sea salt.

Sea salt and Himalayan pink salt have gained popularity due to claims of being a healthier option due to containing minerals like iron, magnesium, and calcium. There are not any health advantages to using these salts over regular table salt. However, table salt has the added benefit of containing Iodine, a mineral that many American do not get enough of due to low seafood consumption. Please remember that sea salt and Himalayan pink salt are still sources of sodium. The mineral content in these fancy salts is very insignificant. And too much of any type of salt can still harm your health.

You can reduce your sodium intake with these tips:

- Dine out less!
- If you must dine out, request “no added salt” and “condiments on the side”
- Taste your food first to determine if the dish really needs extra salt
- Read the Nutrition Facts label and choose foods with 5% or less sodium per serving
- Read the ingredients list and choose foods without salt, or foods with salt not listed within the 1st 3 ingredients (ingredients are listed largest to smallest)
- When buying packaged foods, look for lower sodium alternatives
- Decrease consumption of sandwich meats, pizza, soups, breads and chicken products injected with sodium solution or broth
- Use salt-free seasonings: garlic powder vs. garlic salt
- Use fresh and dried herbs, and herb blends like Mrs. Dash
- Vinegars and citrus juices can brighten up the flavor of foods without too much salt
- Drain and rinse off canned veggies, beans and fruits

Topic 8: How to Reduce Your Salt Intake – Patient Form

Part 1: Test Your Knowledge

1. I dine out 5-6 times per week, but when I cook at home, I do not salt my food.
Is my overall sodium intake low? YES NO

2. Which lunch meal is high in sodium?
a. Subway turkey sandwich b. Instant ramen / Cup O’Noodle
c. Frozen pizza d. All of the above

3. What are ways to help reduce sodium intake?
a. Cook more at home, dine out less b. Eat less packaged foods
c. Use herbs, spice and lemon juice instead of salt d. All of the above

Part 2: Diet Log – Pick 3 days and log your food and drink intake

Meals, Snacks and Drinks	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast			
Snack			
Lunch			
Snack			
Dinner			
Snack			
Drinks			

Part 3: Exercise

Did you exercise this week? YES NO

If not, why: _____

If yes, what did you do and how often: _____

Part 4: Weekly Weigh-in

What is your weight today? _____

Today’s Date: _____

Print Your Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Dietitian Signature: _____ (Lin Lin Shao RD LD)