

## SODIUM FACTS



Your health care provider may have recommended reducing your *salt or sodium* intake. However, this does not mean a *salt or sodium free* diet. Sodium has many important functions for our body and our bodies cannot produce sodium.

### FUNCTIONS OF SODIUM

- Regulates water balance in the cells
- Sends nerve impulses throughout the body
- Controls blood volume
- Necessary for all muscles, including the heart, to contract and relax.

### RECOMMENDED DAILY AMOUNTS

- The American Heart Association recommends an average of 2400 milligrams of sodium per day for all Americans.
- The average daily intake of sodium is between 3000 - 3700 milligrams.
- For persons with Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) doctors have found restricting sodium to 2000 milligrams each day helps to maintain water balance.

### SALT OR SODIUM?

- When sodium is combined with chloride, it is called salt.
- 1 tsp. of salt = 2200 milligrams of sodium.

### SALT SUBSTITUTES

- Salt substitutes are a combination of chloride and another mineral, often potassium, aluminum or calcium.
- Check with your physician before starting to use a salt substitute.
- An increase in potassium may interfere with other medications.
- Flavored salts (garlic, onion or seasoned) are not considered salt substitutes because they generally contain as much sodium as salt.

### FOODS WITH SODIUM

All foods, even water, contain sodium. Foods that have been processed, cured or have visible salt contain more sodium than fresh foods. In general, the more a food has been processed, the more likely it will have a larger amount of sodium.

### CALORIES AND SODIUM

There are no calories in sodium.



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There are many ways to flavor foods without using salt in cooking or at the table. The following information can help when you are planning your menus and grocery lists.

### MENU PLANNING

- As a rule of thumb, use items with no more than 1 milligram of sodium per calorie.
- Make tradeoffs when planning menus. If there's one higher sodium choice at one meal, choose other foods that are much lower in sodium.
- Make your favorite foods from scratch rather than purchasing their frozen counterparts. For convenience, double the recipe and freeze half for future meals.
- Plan for larger servings of grains, fruits and vegetables and less of the entree. Often, the entree has the most salt.
- To add variety to any meal, serve several different vegetables, fruits, or grains.

### SHOPPING

- Use caution when purchasing foods labeled *Instant*. These have a high sodium content to keep the product fresh on the supermarket shelves.
- Read food labels. Reduced sodium means that the amount of sodium is less than in the regular version. Low sodium means that the product has less than 140 milligrams of sodium in each serving.
- Check the manufacturer's serving size. It may be less than what you are using.
- Buy fresh or frozen vegetables and *no added salt* canned vegetables.
- Check with your pharmacist about the sodium content of *over-the counter* medications that are used.
- Look carefully at frozen chicken breasts. Some companies freeze them in a sodium and water mixture, while others use an *individual quick freezing* (IQF) process.

### SNACKS

- Try air-popped popcorn without added salt. Sprinkle on garlic or onion powder or a mixture of cinnamon and sugar substitute.
- Some sweets are low in fat and sodium. Try Fig Newtons, angel food cake, or animal and graham crackers. Check the labels of commercial prepared sweets that are labeled low in fat. They may or may not be low in sodium, too.
- Reduced sodium pretzels offer a lot of crunch with little sodium or fat.
- Purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables and have them cleaned and ready for a quick snack. Freeze fresh fruit, like grapes or orange pieces for a refreshing snack.

