

Healthy Eating Guidelines For Lower Sodium Eating

We need small amounts of sodium, but eating too much can increase the risk of high blood pressure and heart disease. Most adults only need 1500 mg of sodium per day. Many Canadians eat much more than this. To decrease the risk of chronic disease, limit your intake to below 2300mg.

Planning ahead can help you decrease the amount of sodium in your diet. Use the information in this handout to make lower sodium choices.



Steps you can take

1. Limit highly processed foods

- i Highly processed foods are the main source of sodium in our diets. These foods include:
 - n bakery products, such as breads, muffins, cookies, desserts, crackers, granola bars
 - n mixed dishes, such as pizza, lasagna, frozen entrees and appetizers, frozen potatoes, and prepared salads
 - n processed meat, such as sausages, deli meats, chicken wings, burgers, meatballs
 - n cheese
 - n packaged and canned soups
 - n sauces and condiments.
- i If you eat these foods, eat them less often or in smaller amounts.

2. Prepare healthy meals and snacks

- i Cook most meals from scratch using less processed ingredients that have little to no added sodium. Great choices include:
 - n Vegetables and Fruit – fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, canned fruits in their own juice, low sodium canned vegetables.

- n Whole Grains – oats, quinoa, barely, brown or wild rice, and whole grain bread and pasta.
 - n Protein foods – dried or low sodium canned beans, peas and lentils; fresh or low sodium canned fish; unseasoned fresh or frozen lean meat, poultry, seafood, and tofu; unsalted nuts, seeds and their butters; eggs, milk, yogurt, and fortified soy beverage.
 - i Use less salt at the table. All types of salt including kosher salt, sea salt, fleur de sel, smoked salt, and Himalayan salt are high in sodium.
 - i Flavour your foods without adding salt:
 - n Add extra amounts of garlic, onion, and ginger to the recipe.
 - n Use fresh herbs such as basil, cilantro, and mint.
 - n Add crushed garlic, mustard, lemon, lime or orange juice to homemade vinaigrette salad dressings.
 - n Toast unsalted nuts, seeds, or shredded coconut before adding into a recipe.
 - i Try making your own soups, sauces, and salad dressings. Find quick and easy recipes in the “Recipes” section of Canada’s Food Guide at <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>.
 - i Use lower sodium versions and smaller amounts of store bought sauces, gravies and condiments such as ketchup, pickles, olives and soy sauce.
 - i Cook pasta, noodles, rice, hot cereal and other grains without adding salt.
 - i Rinse canned vegetables and canned beans, peas and lentils to wash away some of the sodium. Choose “low sodium” or “no added salt” options whenever possible.
 - i Choose whole fruit, vegetables, unsalted nuts or unsalted popcorn instead of chips, salted pretzels and other salty snacks.
3. Compare food labels to choose foods with the least sodium
- i Check the food label for the following words:
 - n “Sodium-free”, “low sodium”, “reduced sodium,” or “no added salt” will help you find lower sodium choices.

- i The percent daily value (%DV) on the nutrition facts table tells you if a food has "a little" or "a lot" of sodium.
 - n 5% DV or less is "a little" and 15% DV or more is "a lot".
 - n The % DV helps you to compare products. Serving sizes can vary between products. Compare the amount of sodium in a similar serving size. Choose the product with the lowest % DV.

4. Make healthier choices when eating out

- i Restaurant food is often high in sodium.
- i Many restaurants provide nutrition information for their menu items.
 - n Look for this information before you order.
 - n It may be on the restaurant's website, on a poster or in a pamphlet.
 - n Check the nutrition information of menu items and choose foods with less sodium.
- i Other tips for eating out include:
 - n Ask if the meal can be made with less salt.
 - n Order smaller portions.
 - n Share a dish with someone or save half for another meal.
 - n Ask for sauces and salad dressings on the side and use smaller amounts.



Additional Resources

For information and advice based on your specific food and nutrition needs and preferences, call 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a HealthLink BC dietitian.

For additional information, see the following resources:

- i HealthLink BC www.healthlinkbc.ca – Get medically approved non-emergency health information.

- | Dietitian Services Fact Sheets - Available by mail (call 8-1-1) or visit www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating
- | Canada's Food Guide <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
- | Health Canada. Understanding food labels. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/understanding-food-labels.html>

These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.



Notes

Distributed by:

Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating or call 8-1-1 (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.