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# Kidney Disease: Eating Less Sodium

Sodium is a mineral that the body needs in small amounts. Sodium is found in table salt. Most people eat far more salt than they need. That's because salt is present in high amounts in most processed foods (prepared foods such as breakfast cereals, cookies, and pickles) and in all restaurant foods. In other words, if you are not cooking from fresh ingredients at home, you are very likely eating more salt than you 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 chronic kidney disease are often told to eat less sodium. The tips on this sheet can show you how.

People with chronic kidney disease should restrict their salt intake to less than 1,500 milligrams (mg) of sodium daily. Food labels generally report the sodium content. Table salt is sodium chloride. One level teaspoon of table salt contains 2,300 mg of sodium. One of the most effective ways to control your salt intake is to cook more often at home.



## When you shop for food

Unlike canned and processed foods, fresh foods have no added salt and are better for you. When you're food shopping:

- Choose fresh foods when you can.
- Read food labels before buying packaged foods. Check the label's nutrition facts for sodium amounts and servings per package. Remember to check the sodium content of drinks as well as food.
- Try to pick packaged foods with a sodium content of 140 mg (milligrams) or less per serving.

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- Don't choose foods with more than 400 mg of sodium per serving.
  - Choose canned, frozen, or fresh vegetables without added salt or seasoning.
  - Choose fresh or frozen poultry, seafood, and lean meats. Cook them at home instead of buying prepared or ready-to-eat products.

## Season instead of salt

Try the seasonings and foods listed below to season without sodium.

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

Food that has salt added during cooking tastes less salty than if salt is sprinkled on it at the table. So use half the amount of salt you want to have in your food during cooking, and sprinkle the other half on the food at the table.

Don't use seasoned salt or salt substitutes. They may contain sodium or potassium. Potassium is another mineral people with kidney disease are often told to limit.