

Heart Failure: Limiting Sodium

Every "body" needs a little bit of sodium, but too much sodium can cause the body to hold on to extra water.

And if you have heart failure, that extra water can make your symptoms— such as shortness of breath or swelling in your legs—worse.

That's why limiting sodium may help you feel better.

Now just so you know—and you may already know this— salt is the most familiar source of sodium.

So let's start with the foods that you can eat without worrying about sodium: fresh fruits and vegetables.

These are naturally low in sodium.

Choose fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables that don't have added sauces or seasonings.

Now a lot of canned vegetables are high in sodium.

So if you use canned vegetables, look for the words "no salt" on the label.

When preparing foods at home, you can add lots of flavor with salt-free seasonings and low-sodium sauces.

Now, here's something to think about.

The biggest source of sodium in the diet is not the salt you may add at the table.

Most sodium comes from processed foods and foods from restaurants.

Processed foods include canned foods, frozen dinners, and packaged foods such as crackers and chips.

They also include dry mixes, such as those you add to hamburger or noodles.

How will you know?

Food and drink labels list sodium amounts.

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That's why it can be helpful to read labels.

And when you go to restaurants, look for heart-healthy items that might be on their menus.

You can always ask about low-sodium choices.

This may seem like a lot to think about and to do, but with time and a little practice, it can get easier.

Limiting sodium, like the other ways you take care of yourself, just becomes a part of your routine.

It may help to remember that having less sodium can help you feel better.

And if you have any questions about how to limit sodium, you can always talk to your doctor.