

GET THE FACTS:

Sodium and the Dietary Guidelines



The U.S. government recently released the newest version of *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, a research-based guide designed to help Americans make healthier food choices.

What Do the 2015–2020 Guidelines Say About Sodium?

The problem of eating too much sodium is covered in the report:

- The *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend that Americans consume less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day as part of a healthy eating pattern.
- Based on these guidelines, the vast majority of adults eat more sodium than they should—an average of **more than 3,400 mg** each day.

Eating too much sodium puts Americans at risk for developing serious medical conditions, like high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.

So, what does all of this mean for you and your family? And what steps can you take to reduce sodium?

Sodium Can Add Up Quickly

The first thing to know is that the salt you use at the dinner table is **not** the biggest sodium contributor in the American diet. In fact, the majority of the sodium Americans consume—more than 75%—is found in **processed food and restaurant meals**.

And don't let your taste buds fool you. Foods like grains, baked goods, and meats may not taste salty, but they add up to major sources of daily sodium because they are eaten so often.

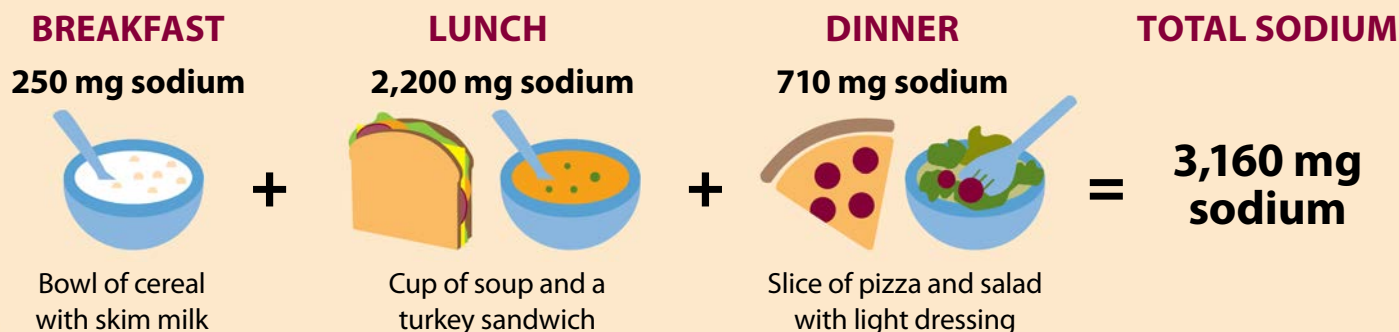
The majority of Americans' daily sodium intake comes from grains and meat, and other top contributors include processed poultry, soups, and sandwiches.

Depending on your food choices, it doesn't take much to consume more sodium than recommended.

- One slice of **bread** can contain anywhere from 80 to 230 mg of sodium, and a slice of **frozen pizza** can contain between 370 and 730 mg.
- Some **breakfast cereals** contain 150 to 300 mg of sodium before milk is added.

SODIUM ADDS UP QUICKLY

Not all foods are high in sodium. But when you combine foods with varying levels as part of your daily diet, sodium can add up quickly.



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- **Canned soups** and soups served in restaurants can contribute high amounts of sodium.
- **Processed tomato products** and **salad dressings** often include salt and other ingredients that contain sodium.
- **Many snack foods**—chips, crackers, and pretzels—contain several hundred milligrams of sodium per serving.

Tips for Shopping Smarter

The more you know about the food you eat, the better the decisions you can make for yourself and your family.

- **Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and low-fat dairy.** Research shows that foods low in sodium and high in potassium can help reduce blood pressure and the risk for other serious conditions. Examples include bananas, dried apricots, and spinach. Low- or no-fat yogurt, beans other than green beans, and potatoes are also low in sodium and high in potassium.
- When eating frozen and canned vegetables, choose no salt added or low sodium versions, or choose frozen varieties without sauce.



In addition to low sodium foods, eating high-potassium foods can help lower your blood pressure.

- When buying processed foods, read nutrition labels and **choose products with less sodium.**
 - Note how many milligrams of sodium are in each serving—and how many servings are in the package.
 - Foods that contain **35 mg** or less per serving are **very low in sodium.** Foods that contain **140 mg** or less per serving are defined as **low sodium.**
- **Check processed meat and poultry,** which are often “enhanced” with salt water or saline.
- Opt for lower sodium or no salt added breads, crackers, and cereals.

Tips for Cooking at Home

- **Use lemon juice and salt-free herbs and spices,** such as garlic and pepper, to flavor your food instead of sauces and prepackaged seasonings.
- Limit added salt while cooking, and taste food first before salting at the table.

Tips for Eating Out

- **Chain restaurants often put nutritional information online.** Check ahead to find the lower sodium options.
- Ask restaurants not to add salt to your meal, and use sauces and condiments only in small amounts.
- **Reduce your portion size**—less food means less sodium. For example, ask the server to put half of your meal in a take-out container before it comes to your table, or split an entree with someone else.
- Ask your favorite restaurants, stores, and food manufacturers to offer more low sodium options.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/salt

For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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