

# Eat Right Ontario - Cut out the Salt

[eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Heart-Health/Cut-out-the-Salt.aspx](http://eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Heart-Health/Cut-out-the-Salt.aspx)

## Cut out the Salt

Most Canadians eat too much salt. Sodium, which is the main ingredient in salt, is needed by our bodies in certain amounts. But too much sodium can lead to health problems like high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease and kidney disease. Eating less sodium can help you and your family stay healthy and feel your best. Even if you don't have high blood pressure, you can still benefit from lowering the amount of sodium you eat.



## How much sodium should you have?

We all need some sodium, but most of us eat about 3400 mg per day. This is more than double the amount of sodium we need.

- Healthy adults need only 1500 mg of sodium per day.
- Healthy children need only 1000 to 1500 mg of sodium per day.
- People with health conditions like high blood pressure or kidney disease may need to aim for lower sodium intakes and should follow the advice of their health care provider.

## Which food are high in sodium?

Over 75 percent of the sodium we eat comes from processed foods such as cheese, deli meats, pizza, sauces and soups. Packaged and ready-to-eat foods, fast foods and restaurant meals are often high in sodium. Breads, breakfast cereals and bakery products also contain sodium even though they may not taste salty.

Here is a list of some common foods which contain sodium:

- Canned or packaged items: soups, stocks, cereal, baked beans, vegetable juices
- Convenience items: seasoned pasta and rice mixes, stews, spaghetti sauce, seasoning mixes, frozen dinners, muffins
- Jarred foods preserved in salt: pickles, relishes, olives, sauerkraut
- Condiments and sauces: ketchup, mustard, relish, soy sauce, teriyaki sauce
- Processed meats: salt-cured ham, bacon, hot dogs, sausages, cold cuts, smoked meats

- Cheese: processed cheese, cheese spreads
- Salted snack foods: chips, pretzels, crackers, popcorn, trail mix, nuts

## Tips for lowering your sodium intake

### At the Grocery Store: Buy lower sodium foods to prepare healthier meals at home.

- Read the information on food packages. Buy unsalted and lower sodium foods whenever possible.
- Compare food labels. Buy the products with the lowest amounts of sodium.
- Look for foods that contain less than 360 mg of sodium per serving.
- Look for products with a sodium content of less than 15% DV (Daily Value).
- Make wise choices from the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide.

### At Home: Prepare your own meals often, using little or no salt.

- Make your own soups, sauces and salad dressings. Try [Fresh Herb Soup](#) or [Chinese Hot and Sour Soup](#).
- Enjoy more vegetables and fruit. Use fresh or frozen instead of canned whenever possible.
- Cook pasta, rice or hot cereal without adding salt.
- Rinse canned vegetables and canned beans, peas and lentils to wash away some of the sodium.
- Taste your food before adding salt. Flavour food with herbs and spices.

### Eating Out: Choose wisely when eating out.

- Order smaller portions or share with someone.
- Ask for gravy, sauces and salad dressings “on the side” and use only small amounts.
- Flavour your food with lemon or pepper instead of adding salt, sauces or gravy.
- Ask for your meal to be cooked without salt or monosodium glutamate (MSG), a seasoning that is very high in sodium.
- Check the nutrition information of menu items before you order and choose foods with less sodium. This information may be in a poster or pamphlet at the restaurant or on the restaurant's website.

## Bottom line

Most Canadians eat too much sodium. Eating too much sodium can lead to health conditions like high blood pressure and kidney disease. By making healthier choices when grocery shopping, cooking at home and eating out, you can help lower the amount of sodium you and your family eats while lowering the risk of health conditions linked to high sodium intakes.

**An EatRight Ontario Registered Dietitian can answer your questions on high blood pressure and send you handouts on reducing the sodium in your diet. Call 1-877-510-510-2 or send an [email](#).**

## **More about hypertension**

[A DASH of healthy eating can help control blood pressure](#)

[Hypertension: How to prevent and treat the silent killer](#)

### **For more information:**

[Get the scoop on salt](#)

[Top 10 lower sodium choices](#)

[28 Cooking Tips for Heart Month](#)

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If you have questions about what you've read here, or other questions about food, nutrition or healthy eating, [click to email our Registered Dietitians](#) or call 1-877-510-5102.