

Kidney Disease and Sodium (Salt)

What is sodium?

The common name for sodium is salt. It is found in many foods. Table salt is sodium chloride.

You get sodium when you use a salt shaker or add salt to cooking. There is also hidden sodium in processed and prepared foods.

What does sodium do in my body?

Sodium keeps the amount of water in your body balanced. It also helps to keep blood pressure normal. Your body needs very little sodium. Extra sodium is removed out of your body by the kidneys.

What happens when the kidneys slow down?

As the kidneys slow down, they may not be able to remove extra sodium. Sodium builds up in your body.

Too much sodium can make you thirsty and you may also notice:

- ankle swelling
- weight gain
- blood pressure may go up

When there is too much sodium and water in your body, you may have trouble breathing. This is caused by water in your lungs.

How much sodium can I have each day?

The recommended amount of sodium you can have each day from all food and drink is between 1500 and 2300 mg.

How can I cut down on sodium in my diet?

- Give up using salt shakers and/or boxed salt.
- Avoid adding salt when cooking. Remember all salt types such as sea salt, picking salt, kosher salt and Himalayan pink salt have similar amounts of sodium and have the same effect on your body.
- Cut down on foods that contain hidden sodium such as salty meat, snacks, processed food, canned soups, pickles and salted sauces. Since many foods have hidden sodium, you need to read labels.

Nutrition Facts Table

A Nutrition Facts table is usually found on the package. This is the best place to see how much sodium is in the food product. You can also use this information to compare foods. Many nutrition facts are listed including calories, fat, carbohydrate, protein and sodium. On the Nutrition Facts, the word sodium alone is most often used. You rarely see the word Salt.

First, look at the serving size to show you how much sodium is in 1 serving.

Nutrition Facts	
Per ½ cup (85 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 60	
Fat 0 g	0%
Saturated 0 g	
+ Trans 0 g	0%
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 35 mg	1%
Carbohydrate 14 g	5%
Fibre 3 g	12%
Sugars 0 g	
Protein 3 g	
Vitamin A	40%
Vitamin C	6%
Calcium	2%
Iron	8%

Serving Size

(Amount of food in one serving).

The serving size is the amount most often eaten. If you eat a different amount, adjust values e.g., if ½ cup = 35 mg Sodium then 1 cup = 70 mg Sodium.

% Daily Value (% DV) for Sodium

- Choose foods with the lowest % Daily Value (% DV).
- 5% or less is low
- 15% or more is high

Can I use salt substitutes?

You cannot use salt substitutes as they are made with potassium. It is not safe to use these substitutes if you have kidney disease. Safe seasonings to use are Mrs. Dash or McCormick (any flavour). You can also make your own recipe using a combination of different herbs and spices you like.

What about salt free products?

Some salt free products may be prepared with salt substitutes. This means they contain potassium. For example, salt free cheese may contain potassium. You would be better off to use regular, hard cheese. Salt-free products can be misleading. For example, canned soups with less than 1% sodium may have the same amount of sodium as a regular soup when you compare serving sizes.

What can I do when I eat out?

When you eat out, ask for food prepared without sodium. Ask for gravies, sauces and dressings on the side. This way, you can use a smaller amount. If you have a few choices, pick food that you know does not contain a lot of sodium. Ask for the hand-out on 'Kidney Disease – Tips for Eating Out'.

Tips to lower sodium:

- Prepare your own foods to give you better control of what is in it.
- Use leftovers to make your own frozen dinners. They make good, quick meals.
- Rinse off some sodium on canned tuna, salmon and canned vegetables or buy lower sodium canned products.

What foods can I eat?

- **Beverages:** Drink water, coffee, tea, low sodium mineral water, lemonade, fruit juice. Talk to your dietitian about your daily fluid limit and acceptable fluid choices.
- **Cookies, crackers and snacks:** Buy crackers with unsalted tops. Eat unsalted popcorn, pretzels or chips instead of potato chips and nuts. Flavour with herbs and spices.
- **Dairy (cheese, milk and other dairy foods):** Substitute block cheese for processed cheese slices and spreads. Avoid feta and blue cheese.
- **Desserts:** Choose sherbet (sorbet) or gelatin.
- **Fats and oils:** Use unsalted butter or margarine. Add seasonings to these spreads or oils and use on bread, vegetables, potatoes and salads.
- **Fruits and vegetables:** Choose fresh or frozen vegetables. Some canned vegetables have no added salt. Look for the label "No Added Salt".
- **Meat and protein foods:** Use fresh roast beef, turkey or chicken for sandwiches. Avoid cured, smoked and pickled meats such as bologna, salami, and corned beef as they are very high in salt.
- **Salad dressings and condiments:** Make your own salad dressings. Use flavoured herb vinegar. Make your own flavoured oils with fresh herbs and garlic in the summer and use these all year round.
- **Seasonings:** Use fresh garlic, onion flakes, celery seeds and garlic powder. Avoid seasoned salts such as onion salt, garlic salt, and celery salt.
- **Soup:** Make your own soup. Do not use bouillon cubes, powder or regular soup bases for flavour. Use salt-free soup bases or broths. Flavour with herbs and spices.

Herb and Spice Guide

Type of Food	Herb or Spice
Beef	basil, bay leaf, chillies, coriander, garlic, marjoram, mustard, oregano, parsley, tarragon, thyme
Bread	anise, basil, caraway, cardamom, cumin, dill, lemon peel, orange peel, poppy seeds, saffron, sesame seeds
Cheese	caraway, celery seed, chervil, chives, curry, dill, garlic, horseradish, lemon peel, mustard, nutmeg, parsley, pepper, sage
Chicken	allspice, basil, bay leaf, cinnamon, curry, dill, garlic, ginger, poultry seasoning, saffron, sage, tarragon, thyme
Eggs	basil, chervil, chives, curry, dill, fennel, ginger, paprika, parsley, pepper, sage, tarragon
Fish	basil, bay leaf, chives, dill, fennel, garlic, ginger, mustard, parsley, tarragon
Fruit	allspice, anise, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, ginger, mint, nutmeg
Lamb	basil, bay leaf, cinnamon, coriander, cumin, curry, dill, garlic, mint, parsley, rosemary, tarragon, thyme
Potatoes	basil, caraway, chives, dill, mace, paprika, parsley, rosemary, tarragon, thyme
Salads	basil, chives, dill, garlic, mint, oregano, parsley, tarragon
Salad dressings	basil, chives, dill, fennel, garlic, horseradish, mustard, oregano, paprika, parsley, saffron, tarragon
Soups	basil, bay leaf, chevril, chillies, chives, cumin, dill, fennel, garlic, parsley, pepper, rosemary, sage, savoury, thyme
Sweets	allspice, anise, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, fennel, lemon peel, ginger, mace, nutmeg, mint, orange peel

For questions contact your dietitian at 905-522-1155 ext. 33604, 33453, 38100. Be prepared to leave a message and a dietitian will call you back.