

Eating Less Sodium Is An Important Part of Your Heart Failure Treatment



To make less work for your heart, doctors advise cutting back on sodium. Sodium is a mineral found in table salt and many prepared foods. It may not be easy to eat less sodium, but it's well worth the effort. You'll be amazed by how much better you feel.

How much sodium should you eat?

Most people with heart failure are advised to limit sodium to about 2,000 milligrams (mg) per day.

That is equal to the sodium in 1 teaspoon of table salt.

How does sodium affect heart failure?

When the heart cannot pump blood normally, less blood reaches the body's major organs. The kidneys respond by retaining sodium and water. The extra fluid collects in the lungs and other parts of the body. Eating foods that are high in sodium makes the body retain even more fluid, which also raises blood pressure. This means the heart has to work much harder.

What are hidden sources of sodium?

Canned soups, deli meats, bacon, ham, potato chips, and fast foods are especially high in sodium. It may surprise you to learn that sodium is also "hidden" in club soda, tomato juice, baking soda, store-bought breads, cakes, cereals, and dairy products. Even bottled waters can contain large amounts of sodium.

Tips on Limiting Sodium

Hide the salt shaker.

The simplest way to cut down on sodium is to stop adding salt to your food. Season foods with herbs and spices instead. Most are very low in sodium. They also add interesting flavors to food. Lemon juice, vinegar, fresh garlic, basil, oregano, curry, and ginger are just a few of the flavorful seasonings that can be used in place of salt.

Choose fresh instead of prepared foods.

Switching to fresh or frozen vegetables, fruits, fish, meat, and poultry can greatly reduce the amount of sodium in your diet. When you must buy prepared or packaged foods, look for foods labeled "Low-sodium" or "Sodium-free".

Read food labels carefully.

Look at the Nutrition Facts Panel on a food label to figure out how much sodium is contained in a single serving of food. Low-sodium foods contain 140 mg or less sodium per serving. Foods that are "Sodium-free" contain less than 5 mg per serving.

Give your taste buds time to adjust.

Low-sodium foods may taste bland at first - especially if you are used to eating salty foods. In just a few weeks, though, your taste buds will adjust. Soon your craving for salty foods will decline, and you will enjoy the natural flavor of foods.

Low Sodium Food Choices

To help treat your heart failure, limit the sodium in your diet to about 2,000 milligrams (mg) per day. Use this chart to help you plan meals and snacks that are low in sodium. Eating less sodium will help you:

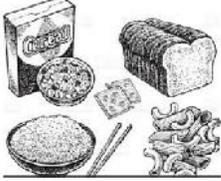
- Keep your body from retaining extra water
- Make your medicines work effectively
- Control your blood pressure

Remember...

One teaspoon of salt has 2,000 milligrams of sodium. Sodium can also be hidden in foods so read food labels carefully. Look for foods labeled "Low-sodium" or "Sodium-free." Low-sodium foods contain 140 milligrams or less per serving. Sodium-free foods have 5 milligrams or less per serving.

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| Food Group | Low in Sodium | High in Sodium |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Breads, Cereals, Rice, and Pasta</p>  | <p>Breads and rolls without salted tops. Muffins. Some cold and hot cereals. Unsalted crackers and breadsticks. Low-sodium breadcrumbs and stuffing. All plain rice and pasta.</p> | <p>Breads, rolls, and crackers with salted tops. Quick breads and biscuit mixes. Some cold cereals. Instant hot cereals. Regular bread crumbs. Packaged and prepared rice, pasta and stuffing mixes which have seasonings or sauce added.</p> |
| <p>Fruits</p>  | <p>Most fresh, frozen, and canned fruits. All fruit juices.</p> | <p>Fruits packages or served with added salt or sodium.</p> |
| <p>Vegetables</p>  | <p>Most fresh, frozen, and low-sodium canned vegetables. Low-sodium and salt-free vegetable juices.</p> | <p>Regular canned vegetables and juices including sauerkraut and pickled vegetables. Frozen vegetables with sauces. Packaged and prepared potato and vegetable mixes.</p> |
| <p>Meats, Chicken, Fish, Dry Beans, and Peas, Eggs, and Nuts</p>  | <p>Any fresh or frozen beef, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey, fish, and some shellfish. Eggs and egg substitutes. Low-sodium peanut butter. Dry peas and beans.</p> | <p>Any smoked, cured, salted or canned meat, fish, or chicken including bacon, chipped beef, cold cuts, ham, hot dogs, sausage, sardines, and anchovies. Frozen breaded meats. Meats with gravies or sauces. Salted nuts.</p> |
| <p>Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese</p>  | <p>All low-fat 1% or skim milk but limit to a total of 2 cups per day. All low-fat or nonfat yogurt. Some low-sodium cheeses.</p> | <p>Buttermilk. Malted, canned, and chocolate milk. Regular and processed cheese, cheese spreads, and sauces including cottage cheese and ricotta cheese.</p> |
| <p>Fats, Snacks, Soups, Sweets, Condiments, and Beverages</p>  | <p>Low-sodium or sodium-free versions of butter, margarine, salad dressings, soups, condiments, and snack foods. Pepper, herbs, and spices. Vinegar. Lemon or lime juice.</p> | <p>Salad dressings, soups, gravies, and sauces made from instant mixes or other high-sodium ingredients. Condiments: catsup, barbecue sauce, soy sauce, teriyaki, horseradish, pickles, Worcestershire sauce, and mustard. Salted snack foods. Meat tenderizers, seasoning salt, "lite" salt, and most flavored vinegars. Commercially softened water.</p> |