

Low-Salt Diet

People with heart failure should strictly limit how much sodium (salt) they eat. We most often think about the salt that comes from the salt shaker, but lots of salt is "hidden" in processed foods. Excess sodium intake leads to fluid retention. Heart failure is worsened by excess fluid, making breathing more difficult. The average American eats 20 times the sodium their body needs. More than 70 percent of our dietary salt is "hidden" in everyday foods.

How Can I Reduce My Salt Intake?

- Replace your salt shaker with spices, fresh herbs, lemon juice or vinegar. Salt substitutes are often high in potassium. Therefore, do not use them if you have been told to limit your potassium intake.
- Avoid packaged food. Foods cooked from scratch are usually lower in salt.
- Read ingredient labels carefully – pay attention to the serving size. You should aim for 1500 mg or less of sodium per day.
- Here are some guides to help when shopping:
 - Sodium-free/Salt-free – 5 mg or less of sodium per serving
 - Very low sodium – 35 mg or less of sodium per serving
 - Low sodium – 140 mg or less of sodium per serving
 - No salt added – this means that there is no extra sodium – keep in mind, some foods are naturally high in sodium. Even with no additional sodium, some foods may be too high in sodium to be a good choice for you.
 - Reduced sodium – at least 25% less sodium than the original product
 - Low sodium – at least 50% less than the original product. Beware of hidden salt in seasoning mixes (taco spices, gravy mixes) and condiments (soy sauce, tamari, Worcestershire sauce, etc.)
- Use unsalted butter instead of salted butter or margarine.
- Avoid smoked meats, cold cuts, luncheon meats, canned soups and broths.
- Read condiment labels carefully – many of them are high in sodium. Also high in sodium are pickles, olives and brined vegetables or meats.
- Avoid medications which contain sodium such as Alka Seltzer or Bromo Seltzer.
- Some healthy foods are surprisingly high in sodium such as buttermilk, cottage cheese, canned fish and canned kidney or pinto beans. Avoid processed and hard cheeses as well.
- Swiss, goat, brick, ricotta and fresh mozzarella are naturally low in sodium.
- When shopping for breads, look for those with 5% Daily Value (DV) or less for sodium. A DV of 20% or more is high.

Call Empath Health with any questions (888) 855-2838:

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