

# Cutting the Salt Practically

**Salt is one of Americans favorite ingredients**, and many of us have acquired a taste for a high salt diet. The American Heart Association and the Institute of Medicine recommends consuming less than 1500 mg of sodium a day. In the Western industrialized nations, one in two deaths is due to a cardiovascular disorder and the average intake of sodium chloride is in the range 3,500 mg/day. Salt restriction may help not only to prevent cardiovascular disease but may also counteract other lifestyle diseases such as obesity.

**When reducing sodium in your diet**, it might take two to three months for your taste buds to adjust to the change. One way to cut back is to skip the table salt. However, most sodium in the diet comes from packaged, processed foods. Eating these foods less often can reduce your intake of sodium and can help lower your blood pressure or prevent high blood pressure from developing in the first place. Shaking the salt habit may seem difficult, but here are simple recipes and practical steps to reduce sodium drastically. See “Lower your Blood Pressure with DASH”

## 5 Steps to Less Salt

### 1. Pass Up Processed Foods

About 77% of salt intake comes from processed food. Some food companies are developing products with less sodium, so keep an eye out for sodium listed on food labels. Only small amounts of sodium occur naturally in foods. Eating mostly natural, whole foods will help keep levels of sodium down. Simple.



### 2. Cut Back on Condiments

Always dress your sandwiches and burgers yourself. This way, you can not only control the amounts of condiments used, you can choose those that are healthy. Feel free to load on all the lettuce, tomato, and onion your heart desires. Each adds only 5 calories or less per serving, and is mostly sodium-free. Tasty!

### 3. Beware of Dressings and Sauces

If you think a little bit of dressing or sauce won't add that much sodium to your meal, think again. Take a gander at some of the dressings offered on your supermarket shelves. Many have between 800-1,000 mg/serving. Ouch!

### 4. Opt for Alternatives

Does it really need salt? Purchase a battery-operated pepper-grinder and your favorite brands of salt-free herb and spice blends. Keep them front and center on the kitchen table to help break the “salt-it” habit. Need?

### 5. Forgo Fast Food

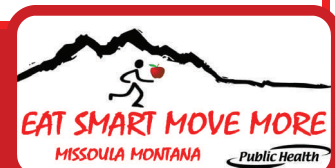
Eating at fast-food chains may be fast and cheap, but you pay the price in calories, fat, and sodium. Many fast-food items are big on sodium. Just listing a few without branding: deluxe cheeseburgers at 2,000 mg, chicken strips with dipping sauces at 1,800 mg, and chili-cheese fries at 2,500 mg. Shocking?

**The Food and Drug Administration has definite guidelines** as to the terms a food company can use when describing the sodium in the food on the label. Keep these terms in mind and make a point of buying low-salt foods on your next trip to the grocery store:

**Sodium free** means less than 5 mg sodium in a portion. **Very low sodium** means less than 35 mg sodium in a portion. **Low sodium** means less than 140 mg sodium in a portion. **Reduced sodium** food contains 25 percent less sodium than the original food item. **Light in sodium** food has 50 percent less sodium than the original food item. **Unsalted, No salt added, or Without added salt** means absolutely no salt has been added to a food that's normally processed with salt. When it comes to controlling sodium levels, read the label!



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- 5% added while cooking
- 6% added while eating
- 12% from natural sources
- 77% from processed and prepared foods

- ◆ Easier Than You Think!
- ◆ Links to Recipes
- ◆ Newest Research



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