

# Watching Salt When You Have Diabetes



People with diabetes are advised to limit salt (sodium). Salt intake doesn't affect blood sugar. But limiting salt may help prevent or control high blood pressure and heart disease. These 2 conditions are a concern for people with diabetes. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) estimates that 2 out of 3 people with diabetes also have high blood pressure. People with diabetes are twice as likely to have heart disease or a stroke compared to people without diabetes.

Most people in the U.S. eat about 3,400 mg of salt each day. This is more than the advised amount. Several professional organizations advise a limit of 2,300 mg of salt each day. Some advise an even lower limit.

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the ADA say to limit salt to less than 2,300 mg per day. The ADA advises people with high blood pressure to talk about their salt limit with their healthcare provider. They also advise people with diabetes to read food labels on processed foods. This can help you find and stay away from hidden salt. It can also help you to stay below your daily salt limit.
- The World Health Organization advises all people to limit salt intake to no more than 2,000 mg per day by 2025.
- The American Heart Association encourages all people to limit salt to no more than 1,500 mg a day. In some cases, your provider may tell you not to do so. But cutting down on salt may help you stay off blood pressure medicines.

## Measuring salt

Common ways to measure salt are:

- 28 grams = 1 ounce
- 1 gram = 1,000 milligrams
- 1 teaspoon salt = 2,300 mg salt

## What foods are high in salt?

Most foods have some salt in them. But it's often added to processed, prepared, and prepackaged foods. Even if you don't add extra salt to food, you still might be getting too much salt. Some foods high in salt are:

- Meats such as bacon, sausage, ham, cold cuts (bologna), corned beef, and hot dogs
- Canned tuna, salmon, sardines, and shellfish
- Frozen, breaded, or smoked fish
- Canned foods such as vegetables, soups, and tomato juice
- Prepared or premixed foods such as boxed macaroni and cheese, potato mixes, and frozen dinners
- Snacks such as salted crackers, pretzels, and potato chips
- Baked goods like cookies and doughnuts
- Cheeses
- Other foods such as olives, pickles, salad dressings, soy sauces, and steak sauce

## Tips for reducing salt

- **Check food labels.** Many stores have low-salt, reduced-salt, and no-salt-added foods. Check food labels for the symbol Na or NaCl. Or look for the words salt or salt chloride. These all mean that salt is in the food. Buy foods with lower salt.
- **Use fresh foods.** Whenever possible, use fresh foods that don't have added salt. Packaged and processed versions may have a lot of salt.
- **Use spices and herbs to add flavor instead of salt.** Garlic and ginger can add flavor without adding salt. Don't add extra salt to your food. And take the saltshaker off the table. You may want to think about salt substitutes. But some salt substitutes have potassium chloride. This may not be safe for people with kidney disease.
- **Rinse canned foods.** Rinse foods before eating them or cooking with them. This can help remove salt.
- **Cook at home.** When you cook your own food, you can control how much salt is added. Processed foods and restaurant meals are often high in salt.

Reading food labels and learning new cooking methods can be hard. Your healthcare team can support you as you make changes. Talk with your provider or a dietitian. They can help you to cut back on salt.

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