

# Discharge Instructions: Eating a Low-Salt Diet



Your healthcare provider has prescribed a low-salt diet for you. Most people with heart problems need to eat less salt, which is full of sodium. Too much sodium is linked to high blood pressure, which is linked to a greater risk of heart disease, stroke, blindness, and kidney problems.

## Home care

Learn ways to cut back on salt (sodium):

- Eat fewer frozen, canned, dried, packaged, and fast foods. These often contain high amounts of sodium.
- Season foods with herbs and spices instead of salt when you cook.
- Season with flavorings, such as vinegar, pepper, lime, lemon, ginger, garlic, and onion.
- Don't add salt to your food at the table.
- Sprinkle salt-free herbal blends on meats and vegetables.

Learn to read food labels carefully:

- Look for the total amount of sodium per serving.
- Look for foods labeled low sodium, reduced sodium, or no added salt.
- Beware: Salt goes by many names. Cut down on foods with these words (all forms of salt) listed as ingredients:
  - Salt
  - Sodium
  - Soy sauce
  - Baking soda
  - Baking powder
  - MSG (monosodium glutamate)
  - Monosodium
  - Na (the chemical symbol for sodium)

Other ideas:

- Use more fresh food. Buy more fruits and vegetables.
- Select lean meats, fish, and poultry.
- Find a cookbook with low-salt recipes. You'll find ideas for tasty meals that are healthy for your heart.
- Buy salt-free or low-sodium condiments such as ketchup, mustard, salad dressings, and other sauces.
- When eating out, ask questions about the menu. Tell the waiter you're on a low-salt diet.

- If you order fish, chicken, beef, or pork, ask to have it broiled, baked, poached, or grilled without salt, butter, or breading.
- Choose plain steamed rice, boiled noodles, and baked or boiled potatoes. Top potatoes with chives and a little sour cream instead of salt and butter.
- Don't take antacids that are high in salt. Check the label before you buy.

## Follow-up

Make a follow-up appointment with your healthcare provider, or as advised. Your provider may refer you to a dietitian.

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