



Following a 2 gram sodium diet

Your health care provider has asked you to follow a “2 gram sodium” diet. This is a diet that moderately restricts the amount of sodium you eat. About $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sodium in our diet comes from salt. But you must also watch out for other foods high in sodium, not just salt.

On this diet, you need to limit your sodium intake to 2 grams (or 2,000 milligrams, abbreviated as 2,000 mg.) a day. Just one teaspoon of salt contains 2,300 mg. of sodium.

What is sodium?

Sodium is an important mineral found in almost all our food and drinks. Our bodies need only about 200 milligrams of sodium a day. But most Americans take in much more – from 10 to 35 times this amount!

Why should I limit the sodium in my diet?

In some people, too much sodium can cause the body to retain fluid. More fluid means the heart must work harder to pump blood. Extra fluid can also lead to swelling or “edema.”

For people with high blood pressure, the extra fluid caused by a lot of sodium in the diet can make the blood pressure hard to control, even with medication. For people with heart failure, too much fluid puts a strain on the heart.

Where does sodium come from?

About $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sodium in the diet of most Americans comes from salt. This includes the salt that is added in cooking, as well as salt added to food at the table. Salt is 40% sodium and 60% chloride. At least another $\frac{1}{3}$ of most people’s sodium intake comes from processed foods (see list below). The rest of the sodium in our diet comes from water and other food.

Processed foods include:

- fast foods
- “convenience foods” like frozen dinners or snacks
- canned food (except canned fruit)
- condiments such as ketchup and pickles
- cheese
- soup

May I use any table salt at all?

Remember, just **one teaspoon** of table salt contains 2,300 mg. of sodium – more than you are allowed in a day. So it is really important that you learn to enjoy foods without adding any salt at all – either before, during, or after cooking.

This may not be easy at first, but try to experiment with the wide variety of herbs and spices that are allowed. (See the attached chart for some ideas.) With some patience and creativity, you can discover new ways to flavor food that are both interesting and good for you!

How do I follow a healthy, 2 gram sodium diet?

Staying away from sodium is just one part of a healthy diet. Healthy eating also means limiting fat, sugar, and alcohol in your diet, and eating foods with fiber. You should eat a variety of different foods every day, including selections of:

- meat, poultry, fish, and meat substitutes
- breads and grains
- fruits and vegetables
- dairy products

Use the attached chart to help you decide which of these foods, and how much of each type, you should eat.

What about food labels?

It is important that you read and understand food labels. Otherwise, you could be eating a lot of sodium and not know it. For some foods, the actual milligrams of sodium may be given, as in the box shown on the right. It shows that for every serving of granola, there are 95 milligrams of sodium. A serving in this case is one ounce. If you eat more than one ounce of granola, you will be getting more than 95 milligrams of sodium.

You can also find “ingredients lists” on most foods. The ingredients are listed in order by weight. That is, the ingredients that are present in highest concentration are listed first.

When reading ingredients lists, watch out for any ingredient that has “sodium,” “salt,” or “soda” as even part of its name. For example, the label below shows that this food has four different sodium ingredients. And “salt” is the fourth ingredient by weight. This product should not be eaten on your diet. If you often use a particular food that doesn’t give nutrition information on the label, write to the manufacturer. Ask for the sodium content per serving. Or ask your dietitian about the food.

Granola cereal: nutrition facts	
Serving size	1 oz. (2 TBS)
Servings per package	16
Calories	130
Protein	3 grams
Carbohydrates	16 grams
Fat	6 grams
Sodium	95 milligrams

INGREDIENTS: Potatoes, vegetable oil, whey, **salt**, dried milk solids, sour cream, onion **salt**, monosodium glutamate, dried parsley, lactic acid, **sodium** citrate, artificial flavors

If salt is listed last on the ingredients list, is this food okay?

Not necessarily! If salt is listed last, it means the other ingredients in the food weigh more than the salt. But that doesn’t mean there is not a lot of sodium in the food. Ask your dietitian if this food is okay, or check the label to find the sodium content per serving. Foods containing 35 mg. of sodium or less per serving are okay to eat. Please use the attached chart for information on sodium content of various foods.

My food is advertised as “very low sodium.” What does this mean?

The Food and Drug Administration has established the following standards for the use of specific food labels about sodium. Here are some guidelines to follow.

Sodium free	Less than 5 mg. sodium per serving	Okay to use
Very low sodium	35 mg. or less of sodium per serving	Okay to use
Low sodium	140 mg. or less of sodium per serving	Use with caution
Reduced sodium	Sodium content is at least 75% less than the original product	Most of these foods are still too high in sodium for you
No salt added, or “without salt”	Used if no salt has been added to a product normally processed with salt	The food may still contain a lot of sodium. Read the food label to check the sodium content before eating.

What about salt substitutes?

Check with your doctor before using any salt substitutes. These products may contain a large amount of potassium or other ingredients your doctor may not want you to have.

Using herbs and salt-free spices

With some practice, you can learn to season your favorite foods without salt and still enjoy the taste. Experiment with the following seasonings, which you may use in any amount.

To add flavor to a variety of foods, try:

- chopped/minced garlic
- garlic powder or onion powder (be sure it’s garlic or onion **powder**, not garlic or onion **salt**)
- fresh ground pepper
- spices such as thyme, oregano, basil, or parsley (use fresh whenever possible for even better flavor)

Season meat with:

- lemon juice
- bay leaf
- crushed red pepper
- rosemary

For chicken try:

- sage
- seasoned vinegar
- ginger

For potatoes:

- try chives instead of salt




Using the “Food choice guidelines”





Attached to this brochure you’ll find a chart that can help you make healthy food choices on a 2 gram sodium diet. You may want to pull out the chart and post it on your refrigerator.

The first column lists the food type and the “recommended servings per day.” This is the number of servings of this food you need for healthy eating. The next column, “Lower sodium foods,” lists a lot of food choices that are low in sodium. Choose foods from this column for healthy eating on your diet.

The far right column lists “High sodium foods.” You should avoid these foods altogether on your diet because they are too high in sodium.

Food choice guidelines: 2 gram sodium diet

Food group, with recommended servings per day	Lower sodium foods : Choose for healthy eating	High sodium foods : Do not eat
<p>Fruits and vegetables Recommended servings: 2-4 servings fruit, 3-5 servings vegetables per day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ fresh, frozen, or canned fruit ◆ fruit juices ◆ fresh vegetables ◆ no-salt added canned vegetables ◆ frozen vegetables without sauces ◆ low-sodium V8® or tomato juice ◆ homemade vegetable sauce with allowed ingredients and no salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ canned vegetables, canned baked beans ◆ tomato or V8® juice ◆ marinated or pickled vegetables ◆ sauerkraut ◆ pickles, olives, and relish ◆ Maraschino cherries ◆ potato mixes, such as instant mashed potato ◆ vegetables with cheese or sauce ◆ dried fruits containing sodium preservatives ◆ tomato sauce and puree ◆ spaghetti sauce (unless homemade with allowed ingredients and no salt)
<p>Dairy products Limit to 2 servings per day due to naturally-occurring sodium</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ milk ◆ yogurt ◆ low-sodium cheese ◆ low-sodium cottage or ricotta cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ buttermilk, condensed milk, evaporated milk ◆ commercially prepared chocolate milk or milkshakes/frappes ◆ malted milk ◆ all other cheeses, including cheese spreads
<p>Breads and grains Recommended servings: 6-11 per day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ bread, English muffins, bagels, pita bread, tortillas - limit to 4 servings a day; one serving is 1 slice of bread, or ½ bagel or English muffin, or 1 small pita) ◆ low-sodium crackers & pretzels ◆ plain noodles, pasta & rice ◆ hot cereals (not instant) ◆ shredded wheat, puffed wheat, puffed rice, or other cereals with 35 mg. or less of sodium per serving ◆ other cereals (except bran, which is not allowed) – limit to ½ cup per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ breads with salted tops ◆ salted crackers, including crackers with unsalted tops ◆ packaged convenience mixes, like Rice-a-Roni® or rice pilaf, pasta salad mixes, stuffing, boxed macaroni and cheese, casserole mixes ◆ instant hot cereal ◆ bran cereal ◆ “quick” baked goods made with baking powder or baking soda, including pancakes, waffles, biscuits, cornbread, muffins, banana bread, other sweet breads ◆ croutons ◆ self-rising flour ◆ cracker crumbs and commercial bread crumbs

Food group, with recommended servings per day	Lower sodium foods : Choose for healthy eating	High sodium foods : Do not eat
<p>Meat, poultry, fish, and meat substitutes Recommended servings: 5-7 ounces per day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ fresh beef, veal, pork, lamb, chicken, turkey, or fish ◆ eggs, but limit to four per week ◆ low-salt peanut butter ◆ dried beans, peas, and lentils ◆ low-sodium canned tuna, salmon, and sardines ◆ reduced sodium frozen dinners, if sodium is less than 500 mg. ◆ fresh tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ kosher meat ◆ frozen, batter-dipped poultry and fish ◆ canned tuna and other fish, pickled herring, lox, caviar, anchovies, gefilte fish, sardines ◆ crabmeat, imitation seafood ◆ fast food, frozen dinners, and canned entrees ◆ deli meats, including cold cuts, reduced-sodium cold cuts, luncheon meats ◆ salted, smoked, canned, pickled, or dried meat, poultry, & fish ◆ chipped or dried beef, corned beef, pastrami, salami ◆ salted or fermented tofu ◆ regular hot dogs, bacon, sausage, Canadian bacon, ham, and salt pork ◆ regular peanut butter ◆ egg substitutes and pickled eggs ◆ canned beans, peas, or lentils
<p>Desserts and snacks Limit to 2 servings a day.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ sherbet, sorbet, fruit ice, Jell-O[®], popsicles ◆ ice cream, custard, ice milk, or frozen yogurt (limit to ½ cup per day) ◆ unsalted nuts, popcorns, pretzels, and chips ◆ homemade pies, made without salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ commercially prepared or frozen desserts and bakery goods ◆ salted nuts, popcorn, pretzels, seeds, chips, party spreads, and dips ◆ cakes, cookies, brownies ◆ instant pudding mixes ◆ chocolate and caramel candies ◆ potato chips and crisps, potato sticks
<p>Soups</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ low-sodium commercially canned & dehydrated soup, broth, bouillon ◆ homemade soups prepared with allowed ingredients and without salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ dried soup mixes ◆ canned soups, bouillon cubes, broth, consommé ◆ commercially prepared soups
<p>Seasonings and condiments, fats, beverages and other foods</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ herbs and spices with no salt; use fresh when possible for best flavor ◆ salt-free seasonings, such as Mrs. Dash[®] ◆ vegetable oils such as corn, soy, canola, olive oil ◆ vinegar ◆ sour cream ◆ unsalted butter, margarine, or mayonnaise ◆ regular butter, margarine, or mayonnaise (limit to a total of 4 teaspoons a day) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ salt, Kosher salt ◆ commercial steak sauce, chili, and barbecue sauces, cooking wine, Worcestershire sauce ◆ commercially prepared sauces, gravies, or gravy/sauce mixes ◆ croutons ◆ salad dressing (unless low-sodium, with 35 mg. sodium or less per serving) ◆ ketchup, mustard, meat tenderizers, tartar sauce, relish, prepared horseradish, salsa, hot sauce ◆ any seasoning containing salt or sodium, such as garlic salt, onion salt, celery salt, lemon pepper, bacon bits, bacon grease, Teriyaki sauce ◆ soy sauce, MSG, Accent[®] ◆ Gatorade[®] ◆ baking soda, baking powder, self-rising flour ◆ instant cocoa mixes, Dutch process cocoa ◆ softened water used for drinking or cooking