



Ontario Renal Network

# Chronic Kidney Disease Nutrition Fact Sheet



## Sodium



NUTRITION FACT SHEET

# Sodium

## ABOUT SODIUM (SALT)

Sodium (salt) affects your fluid balance and blood pressure. When your kidneys are not working well, you need to control your salt intake and avoid foods that are high in sodium. Too much sodium (salt) can cause high blood pressure, which can cause further damage to your kidneys. It can also increase the water that stays in your body and cause swollen face, legs and hands, and shortness of breath. Following a healthy diet that is low in sodium will help control these symptoms.



### Quick Tip:

Do not use salt in cooking or at the table. Try using fresh or dried herbs and spices, vinegar, lemon, and salt-free flavourings to enhance the flavour of foods.



## Low sodium guidelines

Here are some general guidelines to decrease the amount of sodium you eat.

**Try different flavourings:** Do not use salt in cooking or at the table. That includes sea salt, salted spices, salted herbs, and salt substitutes, especially those that contain potassium chloride (e.g., No Salt®, Half Salt®, Nu-Salt®). Instead, try using fresh or dried herbs and spices, vinegar, lemon, and salt-free flavourings to enhance the flavour of foods. Use an “herb shaker” made up of any combination of your favourite herbs and spices. Example: mix together 2 tsp thyme, 2 tsp marjoram, 2 tsp rosemary and 2 tsp sage.

**Eat fresh foods:** Choose unseasoned fresh and frozen vegetables, meat, chicken and fish instead of canned, pickled, breaded or processed foods. Also, avoid fresh or frozen meats that are labelled “seasoned” since these foods have been treated with a salt solution.

**Make homemade foods:** When possible make homemade soups, sauces, casseroles and salad dressings without added salt.

**Watch out for convenience foods:** Avoid buying fresh or frozen convenience foods, canned soups; dried soup, and pasta/rice with sauce mixes; pickles, sauces, processed cheese and salty snack foods such as potato chips, pretzels, cheese flavoured snacks and salted nuts.

**Study food labels:** Read food labels to help you choose low sodium varieties of your favourite foods. Choose foods in which sodium appears at the end of the ingredient list and have lower than 500 mg of sodium per serving for an entrée or less than 125 mg for a snack item. Other sources of sodium on food labels include monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium benzoate, sodium bicarbonate, sodium saccharin, brine, soy sauce, baking soda and sodium phosphate.

**Eating out:** Many restaurants provide healthy menu choices. Ask your server for low sodium choices available on the menu. Your Registered Dietitian can also suggest low sodium foods to eat in restaurants. Another helpful resource is the “Eating Out on a Kidney Diet” fact sheet which is available at the Kidney Community Kitchen website:  
[www.kidneycommunitykitchen.ca/dietinformation](http://www.kidneycommunitykitchen.ca/dietinformation)





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## What can I eat?

Here are some suggestions for lower sodium (salt) foods and snacks:

**Beverages:** Water, coffee, tea, low sodium mineral water, fruit juice, lemonade.

**Candies and sweets:** Sugar candy, honey, jam, jelly, marmalade.

**Cereals:** with less than 125–160 mg sodium per serving.

**Cheese and other dairy foods:** Natural cheese (limit to 1 oz every other day), bocconcini. Aim for 1/2 to 1 cup per day of low fat milk, and/or plain or fruit yogurt, and/or low sodium cottage cheese.

**Cold desserts:** Sherbet (sorbet), gelatin, plain flavoured ice cream.

**Cookies:** with less than 125 mg sodium per serving.

**Crackers:** with less than 125 mg sodium per serving.

**Crunchy snacks:** Unsalted pretzels, unsalted corn chips, unsalted air-popped popcorn (try adding herbs/spices for flavour), unsalted rice crackers, apple cinnamon or caramel rice cakes, homemade pita chips.

**Fats, oils and flavourings:** low sodium margarine, vegetable oils, homemade salad dressing (without salt), whipped topping, whipped cream, sour cream, gravy made without salt, dry spices, vinegars (such as balsamic, wine, raspberry), lemon and lime juice, low sodium baking powder (available at bulk food stores).

**Frozen dinners:** with less than 500 mg sodium per serving—limit to once per week.

**Fruit and vegetables:** best choice is fresh, canned or frozen fruits and fresh vegetables. Frozen vegetables (check label to make sure there is no added salt). Low sodium canned vegetables.

**Meat and other protein foods:** fresh (not seasoned) beef, veal, fish, pork, poultry, eggs and unsalted peanut butter. Leftover roast beef, turkey and pork. Homemade chicken, tuna or salmon salad (made with low sodium tuna or salmon). Note: If using regular canned fish because you can't find unsalted or low sodium, be sure to rinse before using.

**Snack bars:** with less than 125 mg sodium per bar.

**Soups:** with less than 250 mg sodium per serving.

**Specialty flavourings:** (limit these foods to 1 tbsp per day) chili sauce, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, salad dressing.



## What foods should I avoid?

Here are some foods that you should avoid because of their high sodium (salt) content:

**Bottled or canned sauces:** soy, barbeque, oyster, steak, teriyaki.

**Flavourings:** bouillon cubes, consommé, dry soup mixes, salted seasonings (e.g., onion salt, Greek seasoning—check ingredients for salt).

**Canned foods:** vegetables (with salt) and vegetable juices, beans or pasta in sauce, chili, stew, soups.

**Packaged mixes:** for macaroni and cheese, noodles and sauce, flavoured rice.

**Pickled, cured, and smoked foods:** pickles, relish, olives, lox and herring, bacon, salt pork, sauerkraut.

**Processed dairy foods:** cheese slices and cheese spreads, feta cheese, blue cheese, buttermilk.

**Processed meats:** ham, wieners, hot dogs, sausages, salami, pepperoni, pastrami, cold cuts/deli meats.

**Salted crackers:** soup crackers, crackers for cheese and dips.

**Salted snack foods:** crackers, potato chips, pretzels, popcorn, nuts.

**Seasoned meat, fish or poultry**



## Important:

If you have kidney disease a good goal for sodium intake is 2,000 mg per day. Check with your doctor or Registered Dietitian to confirm what your maximum daily sodium limit should be.



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## Processed food

Processing foods adds a lot of sodium. The following table has some examples of the sodium content in fresh and processed foods.

% DAILY VALUE	HOW MUCH SODIUM PER SERVING?	WHAT IT MEANS...
Less than 5%	Less than 125 mg of sodium	<b>Good choice</b> – A low sodium product that can be enjoyed every day.
5 – 10%	Less than 250 mg of sodium	<b>Good choice</b> – A lower sodium product that can easily fit into a low sodium diet
10 – 20%	Between 250 mg – 500 mg of sodium	<b>Beware</b> – A medium sodium product that can fit into a low sodium diet with caution
More than 20%	More than 500 mg of sodium	<b>Beware</b> – A high sodium product that should not be eaten when trying to follow a low sodium diet



## Did you Know:

Processed foods contain a much higher amount of sodium.

## Examples of sodium content in fresh and processed foods

### Cucumber

7 fresh cucumber slices = **2 mg**  
cucumber and 2 tbsp ranch salad dressing = **242 mg**  
1 medium dill pickle = **569 mg**

### Pork

3 oz pork = **59 mg**  
4 slices bacon = **548 mg**  
3 oz ham = **1,114 mg**

### Chicken

½ breast = **69 mg**  
217 g frozen chicken pie = **825 mg**  
219 g crispy chicken fillet sandwich with mayonnaise = **1,424 mg**

### Flavourings

1 tbsp lemon juice = **1 mg**  
1 tbsp soy sauce = **1,029 mg**  
1 tsp salt = **2,325 mg**

# “Nutrition Facts” Label Guidelines

Nutrition Facts (per 250 ml)	
Amount	% Daily Value
<b>Calories</b> 100	
<b>Fat</b> 1.5 g	<b>2 %</b>
Saturated Fat 0.5 g	
+ Trans Fat 0 g	<b>3 %</b>
<b>Cholesterol</b> 15 g	
<b>Sodium</b> 910 mg	<b>38 %</b>
<b>Potassium</b> 190 mg	<b>5 %</b>
<b>Carbohydrate</b> 14 g	<b>5 %</b>
Fibre 2 g	<b>8 %</b>
Sugar 3 g	
<b>Protein</b> 8 g	
Vitamin A 20 %	Vitamin C 10 %
Calcium 2 %	Iron 4 %



## Important:

This label shows a high sodium choice and should not be eaten by someone following a low sodium diet.

## How to read product labels regarding sodium (salt)

Product labels (“Nutrition Facts”) on many foods show how much sodium they contain. This number is shown in both mg and as a percentage of the daily value. Following are some guidelines you can use when shopping for food in the grocery store based on information given on the “Nutrition Facts” label.

## Example: Ready to enjoy chicken noodle soup

- This product label shows that one serving (250 ml) of this soup contains 910 mg of sodium—which is 38% of the recommended daily value. Since this product provides more than 20% of the recommended daily value, it is a high sodium choice and should not be eaten by someone following a low sodium diet.
- Some products have a statement about the amount of sodium in the product on the front of the label. For example: “25% less sodium than our original recipe”. This product may still be very high in sodium, so it is also important to check the Nutrition Facts table to determine the actual sodium content of the item and if it can be included.
- Please note that the level of sodium used for calculating % daily value for sodium in the Nutrition Facts table is more than recommended for a patient with kidney disease.
- If there is no label, or the product content is not listed on the label, many manufacturers provide a toll-free phone number where you can call and request this information.



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## My Notes

My daily goal for sodium intake is:

My Goals: (e.g., I will choose fresh, frozen or low sodium canned vegetables instead of regular canned vegetables)

1.

2.

3.

Key Points:

Dietitian:

Telephone:



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LEADERSHIP JOURNEY (THROUGH CANOE), Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 inches Painted in 2015 © Mike Ormsby

### About the Chronic Kidney Disease Nutrition Fact Sheets

The Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) Nutrition Fact Sheets were created in 2012 by the Ontario Renal Network in collaboration with Renal Dietitians in Ontario to standardize materials and to form a basis for cohesive education tools. The nutrition working group adapted the fact sheets available on the Kidney Foundation of Canada's website to create the CKD Nutrition Fact Sheets. These fact sheets are not meant to replace existing education materials you may have, but rather to supplement them as required. The CKD Nutrition Fact Sheets can be used individually or as a set. The four fact sheets (revised in 2015) are: Phosphorus (phosphate); Sodium; Potassium; Diabetes & Diet.

The CKD Nutrition Fact Sheets were made possible through the efforts and commitments of the Independent CKD Dietitian Working Group: Melissa Atcheson, RD (Grand River Hospital); Darlene Broad, RD (Kingston General Hospital); Shannon Chesterfield, RD (Windsor Regional Hospital); Saundra Dunphy, RD (St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton); June Martin, RD (Grand River Hospital); Christine Nash, RD (University Health Network).

**Need this information in an accessible format?** 1-855-460-2647, TTY (416) 217-1815 [publicaffairs@cancercare.on.ca](mailto:publicaffairs@cancercare.on.ca).