

Sodium And Your Heart

Sodium Facts

Sodium (salt) is a naturally occurring mineral found in most foods and in the body. Sodium regulates blood pressure and is required in your body to maintain basic functions.

Excessive sodium levels in the body cause water retention and that additional fluid level increases the workload on the heart. Symptoms of excess fluid are edema (swelling), shortness of breath and weight gain.

People with heart failure or high blood pressure should reduce the amount of sodium in their diet.

Low Sodium Diet

Talk to your healthcare provider about how much sodium is right for you.

To prevent fluid retention and maintain normal function in the body, 2 grams or 2000 mg of sodium per day is the recommended amount.

1 tsp of salt = 2300 mg of sodium 

Processed Foods

Sodium content increases when food has been processed and as part of the preserving process. Check labels for salt-free or reduced sodium options to avoid additional sodium.

Health Canada, through the Food and Drugs Act., regulates food labelling for Canadian foods. Nutrition labelling for Canadian foods is mandatory on most food. Check the nutrition label on food for sodium content and watch out for imported products, they are not required to list sodium additives.



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Sample Nutrition Label

Nutrition Facts	
Per 9 crackers (23 mL)	
Calories 90	% Daily Value*
Fat 4.5 g	7%
Saturated 2.5 g	
+ Trans 0 g	13%
Carbohydrate 26 g	
Fibre 1 g	4%
Sugars 0 g	0%
Protein 3 g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 275 mg	
Potassium	
Calcium 2 mg	8%
Iron	

*5% or less is **a little**, 15% or more is **a lot**

*This is a sample nutrition label

Portion Sizes and Sodium

Understanding portion sizes can affect the amount of sodium consumed. If the portion is larger than the recommended serving size, then the sodium level will increase – check the percentage to see if you’re still within the optimum range.

Food Containing Higher Sodium Levels

- Canned items – fish, vegetables, and sauces – select low or no sodium options if available or choose fresh instead.
- Cheese – select low sodium options and limit quantity.
- Frozen entrées and prepared dishes – prepare meals at home from fresh ingredients.

Sodium Smart Guidelines

- Choose fresh fruits and vegetables over canned options. Select low or salt-free versions if fresh is not available.
- Reduce consumption of processed foods and prepare and consume more home-made options.
- Try salt-free seasoning options to spice up your culinary experience! Fresh herbs are a great way to add flavour without the additional hidden sodium.
- Check nutrition labels for sodium content.
- Select fresh meat instead of cured, smoked, or processed options.

Use this chart to check what foods to include as part of a low sodium diet.

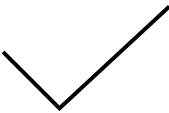
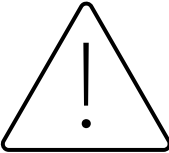
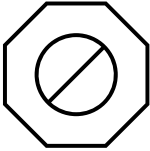
% Daily Value	How Much Sodium?	What it means?
 Less than 10%	Less than 250 mg of sodium per serving	Lower sodium food that can fit into a low sodium diet
 10 to 20%	Between 250 mg to 500 mg of sodium per serving	Medium sodium food that can carefully fit into a low sodium diet
 More than 20%	More than 500 mg of sodium per serving	High sodium food that should not be included in a low sodium diet

Diagram provided by UHN – Your Heart and Sodium (Salt) Restriction guide.



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Resources

Canada's Food Guide	https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/
Heart Failure Patient Education Site	www.tedrogersheartfunction.ca
Heart and Stroke Foundation	https://www.heartandstroke.ca/
Ted Rogers Centre for Heart Research:	
UHN Patient and Family Education	www.uhnpatienteducation.ca

Information provided in part by UHN and the Peter Munk Cardiac Care Centre.

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The information provided is for educational purposes only and does not replace the medical advice from your healthcare provider. Talk to your healthcare provider about advice on specific medical conditions.