

**Consumer and Family Sciences**

Department of Foods and Nutrition



**Nutrition Fact Sheet**

***What You Need to Know  
About Sodium***

*This publication was written by a student in Purdue's Foods and Nutrition 530 course, Public Health Nutrition. The content was reviewed by experts at Purdue and other institutions.*

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**What is sodium?**

Sodium is a part of salt. Table salt is 40 percent sodium and 60 percent chloride. Our bodies need some sodium, and it plays an important role in:

- Muscle contraction.
- Nervous system function.
- Water balance within cells.



A small amount of sodium occurs naturally in some foods. Major sources of sodium in our diets are canned and processed foods. Other sources include many commercially prepared condiments such as ketchup, mustard, and soy sauce. Also, some foods contain salt or sodium added during processing to enhance the flavor, improve the food safety, and preserve the food.

**Risks of a high-sodium diet**

A high-sodium diet can lead to high blood pressure. High blood pressure is a risk factor for stroke, heart disease, heart failure, and kidney disease.

**Dietary recommendations**

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend less than 2,300 milligrams each day of sodium. That's about 1 teaspoon of salt!

**Steps to reducing sodium in your diet**

1. Read food labels when buying prepared or packaged foods. Be aware of words on the ingredient list, such as "soda." Soda refers to sodium bicarbonate or baking soda. Also, the symbol "Na" is another way of listing sodium on the label.

2. Buy foods that are naturally low in sodium. Fresh fruits and vegetables have less sodium than canned options. Also, fresh meats have less sodium than deli or processed meats.
3. Flavor your food without salt. Instead of using salt as seasoning, try adding herbs, spices, pepper, or salt substitutes (such as Mrs. Dash® and other salt-free blends).
4. Take the saltshaker off the table. Learn to enjoy food's natural taste.
5. Drain canned foods and rinse them in water before eating. This will help to remove excess salt before cooking or serving.
6. Follow the "DASH" plan, if you have high blood pressure. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) plan is lower in fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium. For more information, download *Your Guide to Lowering your Blood Pressure with DASH* at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new\\_dash.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf)

## How much sodium is in your food?

<u>Food</u>	<u>Amount of sodium*</u>
Ketchup (1 Tablespoon)	167 mg
Cheddar cheese (1 ounce)	176 mg
Canned ham (1 slice)	287 mg
Sausage (3.5 ounces)	652 mg
Pretzels (10 small twists)	814 mg

\*Aim for less than 2,300 mg total per day.

## Reading food labels

Track the amount you eat by reading food labels on packaged items and avoiding the use of salt as a seasoning.

*Sample food label claims:*

Reduced sodium — 25 percent reduction in usual sodium level of a food

Low-sodium — 140 milligrams or less of sodium per serving

Very low-sodium — 35 milligrams or less of sodium per serving

Sodium-free — Less than 5 milligrams of sodium per serving

## References and resources

The American Heart Association:

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005:

[www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines)

Your Guide to Lowering Your Blood Pressure with DASH: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new\\_dash.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf)

*Complete Food and Nutrition Guide*. American Dietetic Association. 2nd ed. 2002.

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)  
Servings Per Container 2

### Amount Per Serving

**Calories** 250      Calories from Fat 110

### % Daily Value\*

**Total Fat** 12g      **18%**

Saturated Fat 3g      **15%**

Trans Fat 3g

**Cholesterol** 30mg      **10%**

**Sodium** 470mg      **20%**

**Potassium** 700mg      **20%**

**Total Carbohydrate** 31g      **10%**

Dietary Fiber 0g      **0%**

Sugars 5g

**Protein** 5g

Vitamin A      **4%**

Vitamin C      **2%**

Calcium      **20%**

Iron      **4%**

\* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g