

# Your Heart and Sodium (Salt) Restriction



**A guide for patients**



**Patient Education**



**UHN**

Toronto General  
Toronto Western  
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Michener Institute

When you have heart failure or high blood pressure, it is important to lower the amount of sodium (salt) that you eat.

- Sodium causes extra fluid to build up in your body.
- This extra fluid makes your heart work harder and can cause symptoms such as swelling of the feet or abdomen, shortness of breath or weight gain.

## **What is sodium?**

Sodium is a mineral found in salt.

**1 teaspoon of salt =  
about 2300 mg of sodium**



## **What is a “low sodium” diet?**

It is best to limit the amount of sodium you eat to 2000 mg or less per day from all food and beverage sources. This will help you prevent fluid build up in the body.

**Ask your health care professional how much sodium is right for you.**

## Tips to reduce sodium in your diet:

1. Prepare meals at home. When eating out, look for restaurants that offer low sodium choices and avoid fast food restaurants.
2. Avoid using salt when cooking, and remove the salt shaker from your table. Instead:
  - Season foods with lemon juice, vinegars, fresh garlic, herbs and spices.
  - You may choose no salt added seasoning blends, such as Mrs Dash™ or President's Choice No Salt Added Seasoning Blend™, David's Condiments™, McCormick's® salt-free or Club House® La Grill salt free seasonings.
  - Do not use spices that contain salt or sodium, such as garlic salt or onion salt.
  - Avoid using salt substitutes such as No Salt™, Half Salt™, Nu salt™, Windsor® Iodized Salt Free Salt Substitute, Windsor® Iodized Half Salt or Morton's® Salt Substitute.
3. Read food labels to find out how much sodium is in that food.
4. Choose fresh, frozen or canned fruits.
5. Choose fresh, frozen or "no added salt" canned vegetables.
6. Choose dried legumes or "no added salt" canned legumes.
7. Choose unprocessed meat. Avoid processed meat items including cured or smoked meats such as hotdogs, ham, bacon, deli meat or smoked fish. This includes plant-based burgers, hot dogs and deli-meats. Choose low sodium canned fish.
8. Make soups at home or use "no added salt" soups.
9. Choose unsalted nuts and "low sodium" snack foods, such as lightly salted chips and unsalted crackers and pretzels.



10. Avoid pickles, pickled foods, relishes, salsa, soya sauce, ketchup, sauerkraut and olives.
11. Limit cheese, choose lower sodium cheeses such as Swiss, fresh mozzarella and ricotta. Avoid processed cheese and Feta cheese.
12. Avoid instant versions of items such as oatmeal and pudding.
13. Choose low sodium tomato juice and vegetable juices.
14. Limit frozen dinner and entrees.
15. Limit prepared or ready-to-eat meals and side dishes at grocery stores.

### 3 Steps to help you understand food labels:

Nutrition Facts	
Per 9 crackers (23 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
<b>Calories</b> 90	
<b>Fat</b> 4.5 g	7 %
Saturated 2.5 g + Trans 0 g	13 %
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0 mg	
<b>Sodium</b> 275 mg	12 %
<b>Carbohydrate</b> 12 g	4 %
Fibre 1 g	4 %
Sugars 0 g	
<b>Protein</b> 3 g	
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 2 %	Calcium 8 %

#### Step 1:

- Check the serving size
- Compare the serving size with the amount you are going to eat
- Do the math: if you are eating double the serving then you are getting double the sodium

#### Step 2:

Look at the amount of sodium. This information is provided 2 ways:



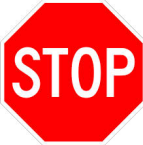
- the actual amount of sodium in mg
- % Daily Value (DV)

Choose one way to check food labels and stick with it.

### Step 3: How to choose low sodium foods

Ask yourself, is this a single food item or a full meal? If the serving size is for a full meal, then a higher amount of sodium is OK. If the serving size is for one ingredient in a meal, you may need to consider all of the other sources of sodium. It adds up quickly!

Use the chart below to check if a food should or shouldn't be part of a low sodium diet.

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

## How much sodium is in the food you eat?

This chart shows the amount of sodium in a normal serving size of some popular foods:

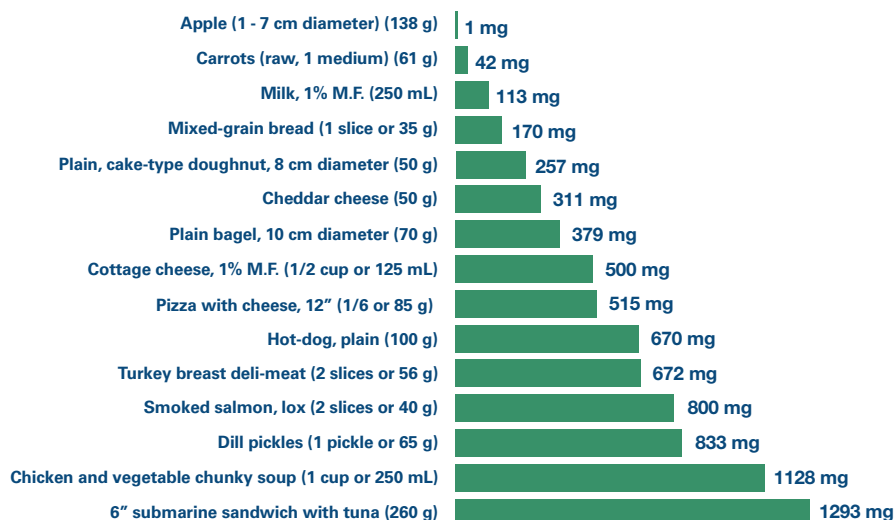


Chart adapted from "Putting Sodium into Perspective", PepsiCo Canada.

## Helpful websites

Ted Rogers Centre for Heart Research: Heart Failure patient Education Site  
[www.tedrogersheartfunction.ca](http://www.tedrogersheartfunction.ca)

Heart Failure Society of America | [www.hfsa.org/patient](http://www.hfsa.org/patient)

UHN Patient and Family Education | [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca)

Heart and Stroke Foundation | [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)

Unlock Food | [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca)

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