

# Low Sodium Diet (2,000 Milligram): Care Instructions

## Your Care Instructions

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Too much sodium causes your body to hold on to extra water. This can raise your blood pressure and force your heart and kidneys to work harder. In very serious cases, this could cause you to be put in the hospital. It might even be life-threatening. By limiting sodium, you will feel better and lower your risk of serious problems.

The most common source of sodium is salt. People get most of the salt in their diet from canned, prepared, and packaged foods. Fast food and restaurant meals also are very high in sodium. Your doctor will probably limit your sodium to less than 2,000 milligrams (mg) a day. This limit counts all the sodium in prepared and packaged foods and any salt you add to your food.

And try to further reduce how much sodium you eat to less than 1,500 mg a day if you are 51 or older, are black, or have high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

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### Read food labels

- Read labels on cans and food packages. The labels tell you how much sodium is in each serving. Make sure that you look at the serving size. If you eat more than the serving size, you have eaten more sodium.
- Food labels also tell you the Percent Daily Value for sodium. Choose products with low Percent Daily Values for sodium.
- Be aware that sodium can come in forms other than salt, including monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium citrate, and sodium bicarbonate (baking soda). MSG is often added to Asian food. When you eat out, you can sometimes ask for food without MSG or added salt.

### Buy low-sodium foods

- Buy foods that are labeled "unsalted" (no salt added), "sodium-free" (less than 5 mg of sodium per serving), or "low-sodium" (less than 140 mg of sodium per serving). Foods labeled "reduced-sodium" and "light sodium" may still have too much sodium. Be sure to read the label to see how much sodium you are getting.
- Buy fresh vegetables, or frozen vegetables without added sauces. Buy low-sodium versions of canned vegetables, soups, and other canned goods.

## Prepare low-sodium meals

- Cut back on the amount of salt you use in cooking. This will help you adjust to the taste. Do not add salt after cooking. One teaspoon of salt has about 2,300 mg of sodium.
- Take the salt shaker off the table.
- Flavor your food with garlic, lemon juice, onion, vinegar, herbs, and spices. Do not use soy sauce, lite soy sauce, steak sauce, onion salt, garlic salt, celery salt, mustard, or ketchup on your food.
- Use low-sodium salad dressings, sauces, and ketchup. Or make your own salad dressings and sauces without adding salt.
- Use less salt (or none) when recipes call for it. You can often use half the salt a recipe calls for without losing flavor. Other foods such as rice, pasta, and grains do not need added salt.
- Rinse canned vegetables, and cook them in fresh water. This removes some—but not all—of the salt.
- Avoid water that is naturally high in sodium or that has been treated with water softeners, which add sodium. Call your local water company to find out the sodium content of your water supply. If you buy bottled water, read the label and choose a sodium-free brand.

## Avoid high-sodium foods

- Avoid eating:
  - Smoked, cured, salted, and canned meat, fish, and poultry.
  - Ham, bacon, hot dogs, and luncheon meats.
  - Regular, hard, and processed cheese and regular peanut butter.
  - Crackers with salted tops, and other salted snack foods such as pretzels, chips, and salted popcorn.
  - Frozen prepared meals, unless labeled low-sodium.
  - Canned and dried soups, broths, and bouillon, unless labeled sodium-free or low-sodium.
  - Canned vegetables, unless labeled sodium-free or low-sodium.
  - French fries, pizza, tacos, and other fast foods.
  - Pickles, olives, ketchup, and other condiments, especially soy sauce, unless labeled sodium-free or low-sodium.



### Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.healthwise.net/ed>

Enter **V843** in the search box to learn more about "**Low Sodium Diet (2,000 Milligram): Care Instructions**".

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