

# Managing **Sodium** in Your Diet



# Let's get Specific About Sodium

**Sodium** is an essential mineral and our body does not work without it. In fact, the nervous system needs sodium to send signals through our body at the right times. Walking, talking, breathing, and smiling all need sodium.

When you hear the word sodium, you might think about salt. Salt is what we add to our food and it contains sodium and other minerals. Even though sodium is an important part of our diet, the majority of us are consuming too much extra salt in our food.

The kidneys help keep the amount of sodium in our bodies at a healthy level. Over time, our bodies - especially our kidneys and heart - get tired of working to get rid of extra sodium if we have too much. This can cause health issues.



## How Much is too Much?

The recommended amount of sodium for someone with congestive heart failure (CHF) is 1,500mg-2,000mg per day. The amount you need depends on your health, age, and medications.

To give you an idea about how much sodium you might be getting from the salt shaker alone, take a look at the table below:

- ¼ teaspoon salt = 575 mg sodium**
- ½ teaspoon salt = 1150 mg sodium**
- ¾ teaspoon salt = 1725 mg sodium**
- 1 teaspoon salt = 2300 mg sodium**

## Sources of Sodium

The American Heart Association has identified the “Salty Six,” six popular foods with high amounts of sodium:

Breads and rolls, pizza, sandwiches, canned soup, cold cuts and cured meat (deli meat), burritos and tacos

**Other common high sodium foods include:**

Condiments and sauces (ketchup, mustard, BBQ sauce, soy sauce, worcestershire sauce, pickles, olives, salted nuts and seeds, cheese, frozen entrees, and snacks such as chips



# Packaged Foods Contain Some of the Highest Amounts of Sodium out There

Sometimes it is impossible to avoid packaged food. It is convenient and fast and can serve an important purpose at times. If you have to choose a packaged food, look for one that has a lower amount of sodium. It may take some searching if you've never explored lower sodium packaged foods before.

When it comes to sodium, there are four ways that food can be labeled on a package. Keep this information in mind when shopping to make sure you are buying the best option.



## **Sodium Free**

**Less than 5 mg**  
of sodium in each serving

## **Very Low Sodium**

**45 mg or less**  
of sodium in each serving

## **Low Sodium**

**140 mg or less**  
of sodium in each serving

## **Light in Sodium**

**<50% original amount**  
of sodium in each serving

# Reducing Your Sodium Intake

At first, cutting back on sodium may not feel very easy. It may not even taste all that great. But, after a little while (about three weeks) most people find their taste buds have changed to their lower sodium lifestyle. Here are some tips on how to reduce your sodium, but still keep things exciting.

## Trade it out

One easy way to reduce your sodium intake is to take the salt shaker off your table. You can liven up your food with herbs, spices, or citrus. Like some kick? Try some Cajun seasoning, cumin, cayenne, or red pepper flakes. Looking for something tamer but still delicious? Try some mint, basil, or oregano, or add a squeeze of lime, lemon, or orange to your meal to enhance the flavor.

## Try new Cooking Tricks

Change up the way that you are cooking. Do you usually bake your chicken? Why not grill instead? What about roasting your vegetables with your favorite seasonings or sautéing mixed vegetables to make a stir fry? (You can even add grilled chicken!)

## Mix it up

Can't give up your regular sodium items just yet? Try combining them with reduced sodium options. Try this with canned broths and soups!

## Wash it Away

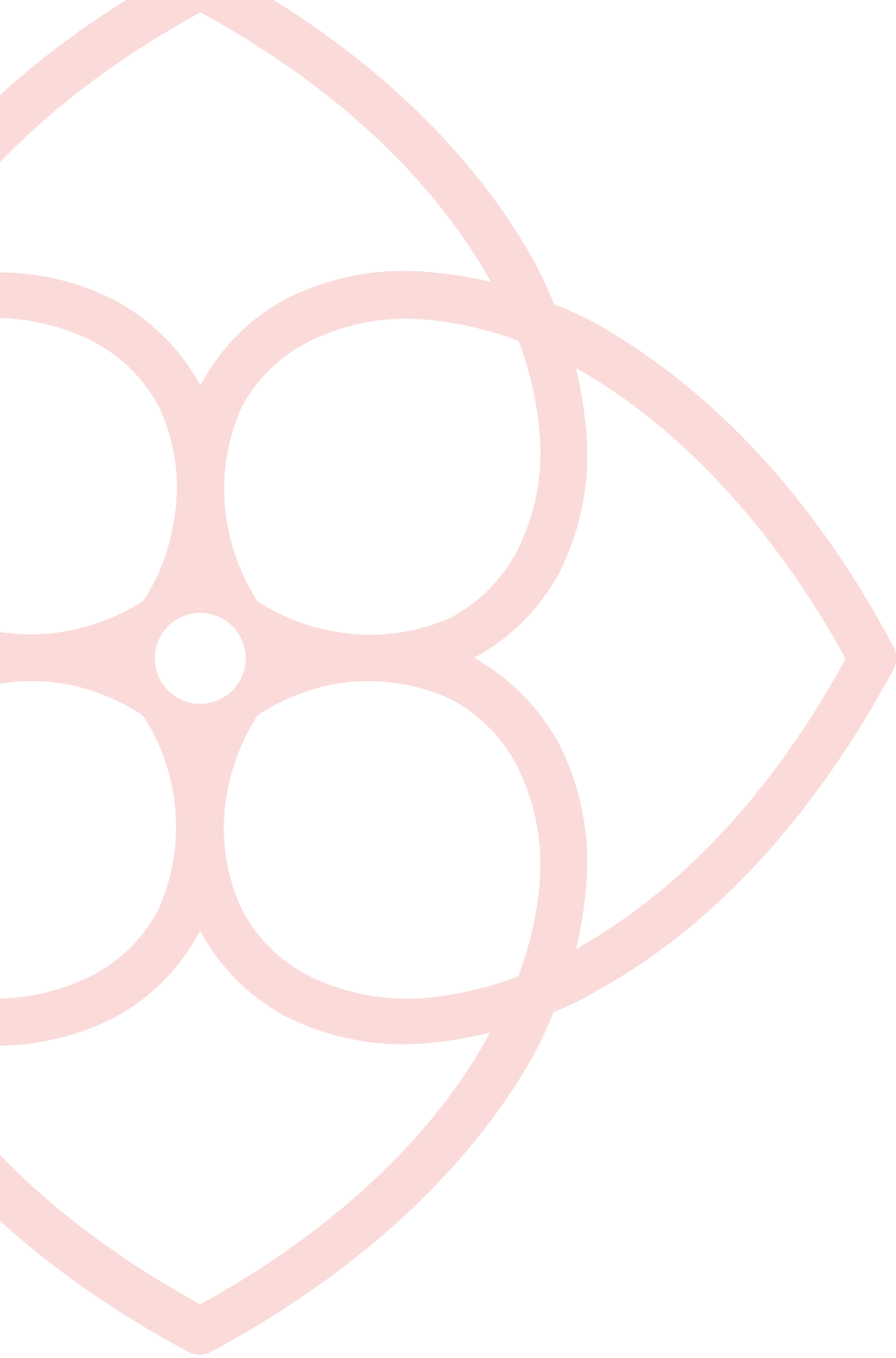
Drain and rinse canned items like beans and vegetables to reduce the sodium content of these convenient, shelf-stable items.

## From Lesson to Action

Do you think your sodium intake is higher than it should be?

What two foods that you eat regularly do you think contain the most sodium?

What two ways can you reduce your sodium intake this week?



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