Avoid Hidden Sources of Sodium

RISE ABOVE Heart Failure

Most of us take in more sodium through packaged convenience foods and snacks than by using table salt. Always look for “low-salt” or “low-sodium” labels on cans and packages. This label means the food has 140 milligrams or less sodium per serving. “No added salt” means that no salt was added during processing. Some foods labeled “no added salt” may contain less sodium than foods labeled “low-sodium” but some may contain more. Always compare the sodium content for several similar foods and choose the food or beverage product with the lowest amount of sodium. Also, look for food packages labeled “sodium-free,” “salt-free,” “no sodium” and “very low sodium.”

“Reduced-salt” or “reduced-sodium” simply means that the product has at least 25 percent less sodium than the original version of the same product. These foods may still have more sodium than you should eat.

Be sure to check the labels on the following foods:

- Canned soups and dry soup mixes
- Canned meats and fish
- Ham, bacon and sausage
- Salted nuts and peanut butter
- Instant cooked cereals, such as grits
- Salted butter and margarine
- Processed meats, such as deli items and hot dogs
- Prepared baking mixes (pancake, muffin, cornbread, etc.)
- Prepackaged frozen dinners
- Preseasoned mixes (tacos, chili, rice, sauces, gravies, etc.)
- Snack foods (pretzels, potato chips, olives, pickles)
- Cheese
- Canned tomatoes or tomato sauces
- Salad dressings
- Fast food items



Many foods contain more than one form of sodium. Any of the following ingredients means that the product has sodium in it:

- Sodium alginate
- Sodium sulfite
- Sodium caseinate
- Disodium phosphate
- Sodium benzoate
- Sodium hydroxide
- Monosodium glutamate or MSG
- Sodium citrate

Some medicines are also high in sodium. Always read the sodium content and warnings before taking any over-the-counter medicine. Avoid headache or heartburn medications that contain sodium carbonate or bicarbonate. Ask your healthcare provider to recommend the over-the-counter medications that are best for you.

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