

## The Facts on Sodium

Taking steps to reduce the amount of sodium in your diet is one of the most important steps you can take to help lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of having a stroke or developing heart disease.



Did you know?

- The average Canadian consumes 2760 mg of sodium per day, almost double the daily recommended amount
- 80% of the sodium we eat comes from processed, packaged and restaurant foods, not salt the shaker

What is sodium?

- Sodium is naturally occurring in a variety of foods
- Sodium is an essential mineral needed for a variety of functions in the body, some key functions of sodium include:
  - Muscle contractions
  - Maintaining proper fluid balance
  - Blood pressure control
  - Transmission of nerve impulses
- Consuming too much sodium makes your body retain water and if you eat too much, the extra water stored increases your blood pressure

Salt and sodium, are they the same thing?

- Salt is made from combining sodium and chloride molecules together, 1 tsp of table salt contains approximately 2300 mg of salt
- All types of salt (kosher, sea salt, fleur de sel, pink Himalayan, and gourmet salt) all contain the same amount of sodium as regular table salt

In order to help lower your blood pressure, aim to consume less than 2000 mg of sodium per day. Listed below are some tips and suggestions for how you can take steps to reduce your sodium intake at home, in the grocery store and at restaurants.

At home:

- Cook with little or no salt. When a recipe calls for salt, stop and taste the food before adding any salt to see if the dish truly needs salt
- When adding salt, use less than what original recipe calls for
- Opt for no salt added canned vegetables, beans, lentils and chickpeas if available. If salt free canned items aren't available, just rinse prior to using
- Cook pasta noodles, potatoes and rice in unsalted water
- Reduce the amount of seasoning used that comes with taco kits, macaroni and cheese and rice mixes

## Family Health Team

- Limit the use of high sodium condiments such as BBQ sauce, soy sauce, hoisin sauce, fish sauce, oyster sauce, ketchup, relish, and pickles

### At the grocery store:

- Limit the packaged and/or ready-to-eat foods you buy
- Read all nutrition labels and opt for products with no salt added or reduced sodium
- Use the percent daily value (% DV) on the label to compare products and see if the food has a little or a lot of sodium.
- Limit consumption of products containing 15% DV for sodium



- Even if a food does not taste salty, it might be a hidden source of sodium.
- The top 6 contributors of sodium in the Canadian diet are: bakery products (breads, crackers, cookies, muffins, granola bars), appetizers/ entrees, processed meats, cheese, soups, sauces/condiments
- When selecting fresh or frozen poultry, pick varieties that have not been injected with a sodium solution. Read the fine print on the packaging and watch out for terms like “broth”, “saline” or “sodium solution”

### At restaurants:

- Ask for gravies, sauces and salad dressing “on the side” and try only use a small amount
- Ask for your meal to be cooked without salt or monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Check and see if the nutritional information is available online and opt for a dish containing less sodium