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Low Sodium Diet

A low sodium diet is a diet that includes no more than 1,500 to 2,400 mgs of sodium per day. (As an example 1 teaspoon of salt = approx. 2,300 mg sodium.) The exact amount of sodium restriction should be determined by your doctor and depends on your age, the reason for sodium restriction, and your medical history.

Sodium occurs naturally in most foods. The most common form of sodium is sodium chloride, which is table salt. Milk, beets, and celery also naturally contain sodium, as does drinking water, although the amount varies depending on the source. Sodium is also added to various food products. These are ingredients in condiments and seasonings such as Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, onion salt, garlic salt, and bouillon cubes. Processed meats, such as bacon, sausage, and ham, and canned soups and vegetables are all examples of foods that contain added sodium. Fast foods are generally very high in sodium.

Below are general recommendations for following a low salt diet:

- Eat fewer processed foods such as potato chips, frozen dinners and cured meats.
- Choose foods labeled “low sodium” or “reduced sodium.”
- Don’t add salt to your food. Instead, use herbs and spices to flavor foods.
- Eat more unprocessed, fresh foods, such as fresh fruits, vegetables, lean meats, poultry, fish and unprocessed grains.
- Do not drink water from water softeners.
- Check every “Nutritional Information” label before you buy or use a product. Note sodium and portion size information.

Below is a list of foods that are naturally low in sodium:

- Seasonings: Black, cayenne, or lemon pepper, mustard, chili or hot sauce
- Herbs: Dried or fresh garlic, garlic/onion powder (no salt), dill, parsley, rosemary, basil, cinnamon, cloves, paprika, oregano, ginger, vinegar, cumin, nutmeg
- Fresh fruits and vegetables (celery, carrots, beets, spinach)
- Dried beans, peas, rice, lentils
- Macaroni, pasta, noodles, rice, barley (cooked in unsalted water)
- Honey, sugar
- Unsalted butter
- Unsalted dry curd cottage cheese
- Fresh beef, pork, lamb, fish, shrimp, egg
- Skim milk, yogurt
- Hot cereals
- Club soda, coffee, seltzer water, soy milk, tea