



Food Sources: Sodium

Sodium is an essential electrolyte that helps regulate fluid balance in the body, supports normal blood pressure, and aids in the absorption of nutrients such as chloride, glucose, and amino acids. Most dietary sodium comes in the form of salt (sodium chloride), whether from table salt, sea salt, or the salt added to processed and restaurant-prepared foods. Sodium can also be found in food additives like baking soda, baking powder, monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium citrate, sodium nitrate, and disodium phosphate. Naturally, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains are very low in sodium.

Consuming too much sodium is strongly linked to high blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Current dietary guidelines recommend keeping sodium intake at no more than 2,300 milligrams per day, and those with high blood pressure are advised to limit it further to 1,500 milligrams daily.

Common Sources of Sodium:

- Processed foods: breads, cold cuts, bacon, ham, cheese, canned/boxed soups, broths, hot dogs, pizza, frozen meals, and packaged convenience foods.
- Condiments: ketchup, mustard, salad dressings, soy sauce, barbecue sauce, miso, steak sauce, Worcestershire sauce, pickles, relishes, and other pickled products.
- Dairy and meats: especially cheese, processed meats, and shellfish.

Food Label Terms Related to Sodium Content:

- Sodium-free / salt-free: less than 5 mg per serving
- Very low sodium: 35 mg or less per serving
- Low sodium: 140 mg or less per serving
- Reduced / less sodium: at least 25% less than the regular product*

- Lite / light in sodium: at least 50% less sodium than the regular version*
- Unsalted / no salt added: no salt added during processing*

*Even with these claims, sodium content may still be significant, so always check the nutrition label.

Tips for Reducing Sodium Intake:

- Cook more meals at home and season with herbs, spices, or citrus instead of salt.
- Taste food before adding salt—often less is needed than you think.
- Limit high-sodium condiments or use them sparingly.
- Give your palate time to adjust—taste buds adapt to less salt within a few weeks.