

Smart Ways to Scale Back on Sodium

These tips can help you cut back on salt and could benefit your blood pressure.

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There's no “magic bullet” for preventing

high blood pressure, but a smart diet and regular exercise may help you keep it at a healthy level. You probably already know that cutting back on your sodium is part of that smart diet. The following tips will help you reduce salt while still enjoying delicious meals.

Use fresh ingredients instead of processed. Make your own sauces and soups and cook dried beans instead of using canned. Cook in big batches, and freeze in single-serving portions for later.

Choose convenience foods wisely. Opt for frozen (unsauced) vegetables over canned—and when you can't, seek out low- or reduced-sodium varieties. Rinse vegetables in a colander before using to wash away of some of the salt.

Don't add it if you can't taste it. Add salt to a dish when its impact will be strongest—usually at the end of cooking. A little salt goes further if it's sprinkled on food just before serving.

Distract your palate. Acidic flavorings like lemon or lime juice and vinegar can help bring out a food's inherent savoriness, helping you reduce or even eliminate salt. Or, try a sprinkle of freshly grated lemon zest, chopped fresh or dried herbs, garlic or shallots.

Boost vegetable flavors naturally. Instead of reaching for the salt shaker, roast or grill your vegetables to help bring out their own natural sweetness and give them a nice caramelized exterior.

Size up your servings. Check the label to be sure you're not doubling—or tripling—the intended serving size (and sodium).

Scan sodium counts on condiments. Many condiments, including meat tenderizer, steak sauce, soy sauce, salsa and ketchup, pack high doses of sodium.

Give yourself a hand. If you must add salt to your meal, shake it into your hand before sprinkling it on your food. Seeing exactly how much you're adding can help you control it.



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