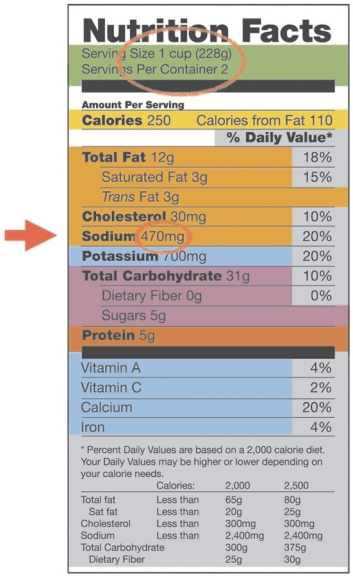
Healthy Eating: How to Read Food Labels to Cut Back on Sodium



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Potassium 700mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Reading food labels will help you cut back on sodium. Food labels list the amount of sodium for each serving.

Unless your doctor has given you a specific limit, you should limit your sodium (salt) to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) a day. That is less than 1 teaspoon of salt a day, including all the salt you eat in foods you cook or in packaged foods. If you have heart failure, limit your sodium to less than 2,000 mg a day. Keep a list of everything you eat and drink.

Make sure you look at the serving sizes. If you eat two servings, you will get twice the amount of sodium listed on the label. For example, on the sample label, there are 470 mg of sodium in a 1-cup serving. If you eat two servings (2 cups), that is 940 mg of sodium.

Foods high in sodium

Packaged and processed foods have a lot of sodium. **Avoid these foods, or eat only small amounts:**

- Smoked, salted, and canned meat, fish, and poultry
- Ham, bacon, hot dogs, and lunch meats
- Hard and processed cheeses
- Regular peanut butter (you can buy unsalted peanut butter)
- Crackers (unless they are low-sodium)
- Frozen prepared meals
- Canned and dried soups and broths
- Canned vegetables
- Snacks, chips, and pretzels
- Pickles and olives
- Ketchup, mustard, and steak sauce
- Soy sauce
- Salad dressings
- Pre-seasoned rice, pasta, or other side dishes

Foods low in sodium

Some processed foods are made with less sodium.

Look for foods labeled "no salt added." Foods labeled "sodium-free" have less than 5 mg of sodium in a serving. Foods called "low-sodium" have less than 140 mg of sodium in a serving.

A food labeled "light sodium" has less than half the sodium than normal. Foods labeled "reduced-sodium" may still have too much sodium. **Choose these foods:**

- Fresh or frozen fruits
- Fresh or frozen vegetables

- Unsalted nuts
- Dry beans or lentils, cooked without salt
- Pasta, rice, or other grains made without salt
- Whole-grain breads
- Fish, meat, and poultry made without salt
- Unsalted crackers or chips

Use garlic, lemon juice, onion, vinegar, herbs, and spices instead of salt.

Make your own salad dressings and sauces without adding salt.

Use less salt (or none) when recipes call for it. You can use half the salt a recipe calls for without losing too much flavor.

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