

HOW TO LOWER SODIUM INTAKE & REDUCE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

How does sodium affect my health?

Sodium is a mineral that supports vital functions. It's regulated by your kidneys and helps control the fluid in your body. It also affects your nerves and muscles.

How does sodium affect my blood pressure?

Too much sodium causes your body to hold onto water. It's like turning up the water supply to a garden hose – the pressure in the hose increases as more water is pushed through it. Increased blood flow also makes the heart work harder to pump more blood through the body.

High blood pressure is known as the "silent killer" because its symptoms may be hard to see. It's a major risk factor for heart disease, which is the leading cause of death worldwide. It can also lead to stroke, kidney and other vascular disease.

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CREATING A HEALTHIER KENTUCKY

At UK HealthCare, we're leading the way to help all Kentuckians live their healthiest lives.

Follow these tips to reduce your sodium intake:

1. Read nutrition labels:

Check the sodium content on food labels. Choose products labeled "low sodium" or "sodium-free."

2. Choose fresh, whole foods:

Select fresh fruits, vegetables, lean meats and whole grains. These foods are naturally lower in sodium than processed foods.

3. Limit processed foods:

Processed and packaged foods are often high in sodium. Limit pre-packaged snacks, canned soups and frozen meals.

4. Cook at home:

- Prepare meals at home using fresh ingredients. This lets you control how much salt is in your dishes.
- Condiments like ketchup, soy sauce and salad dressings can be high in sodium. Choose low-sodium versions or only use a little.

5. Rinse canned foods:

When using canned vegetables, beans or fish, rinse them under water. This helps reduce the sodium.

6. Limit processed meats:

Processed meats, such as bacon, sausages and deli meats, tend to be high in sodium. Choose fresh, lean meats or plant-based alternatives.

7. Choose low-sodium snacks:

Avoid salty snacks. Instead, choose options like unsalted nuts, fresh fruits or raw vegetables.

8. Stay hydrated:

Drink plenty of water. This helps flush extra sodium from your body and supports overall health.

9. Mindful dining out:

- When dining at restaurants, ask for your dish to be prepared with less salt.
- Be cautious of sauces and dressings.
- Check the sodium content of foods – it's often listed on the menu.

10. Consult a healthcare professional:

If you have specific health concerns or conditions, consult with a healthcare professional or a registered dietitian for personalized advice.

How can I learn more?

Visit UK HealthCare's Gill Heart & Vascular Institute site:
ukhealthcare.com/gill

Try the "DASH" Diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension):
ukhealthcare.com/dash-diet

Blood pressure guidelines:
ukhealthcare.com/bp-guidelines

Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.