

Lower Your Blood Pressure with a healthy diet

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is preventable and treatable with diet for many people. It's important to follow a diet low in sodium and abundant in fresh, whole foods. Here's how to do it!



Sodium Facts

- Sodium is a mineral found naturally in food and in salt.
- Sodium is important for fluid balance, muscle function, nerve transmission, and much more. We need about 500 mg per day (1/4 tsp salt).
- The general recommendation is to keep sodium intake under 2300mg/day, but those with hypertension may need to limit further. A teaspoon of salt has 2000 mg of sodium.

Did you know?

- MOST of the sodium in the US diet comes from packaged, processed, and prepared foods – not the salt shaker.
- Along with less sodium, it's important to increase other minerals for healthy blood pressure, namely potassium, magnesium, and calcium.
- Sodium is hidden in many foods that don't taste salty, like breakfast cereal, pasta sauce, even some sweets. Read labels every time.
- If you're cutting down on salt, go gradually, as your taste buds take time to adjust. Soon foods will taste better without the salt.
- Both caffeine and alcohol can raise blood pressure, so be mindful.



Foods to Limit

- Salted chips, nuts, popcorn, crackers, pretzels, etc.
- Cheese and cheese sauce
- Fast food / deep fried foods
- Pickles and olives
- Most heat-and-eat foods like canned soups, frozen pizza, and frozen dinners
- Tomato-based products like pasta sauce and tomato juice (unless no added salt)
- Condiments like ketchup, soy sauce, and dressings
- Shellfish
- Processed and deli meats
- Many baked goods (especially biscuits, flour tortillas, and some breads)
- Many breakfast cereals

Foods to Enjoy

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Frozen fruits and veggies, no added ingredients
- Unsalted nuts, seeds, and nut butters
- Dried beans and lentils (if canned, rinse well)
- Whole grains like oats, brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat pasta, popcorn, etc. made without salt
- Eggs
- Fresh meats and poultry
- Fin-fish like salmon, haddock, and cod
- Single-ingredient canned foods with no added salt
- Garlic, ginger, and other fresh or dried herbs and spices

Be Salt Savvy!

- Always read nutrition labels! The sodium value is required. Make sure you check the serving size too!
- Season your food with fresh and dried fruits, herbs, spices, salt-free blends, vinegars, hot peppers, and lemon/lime juice.
- At restaurants, ask for no added salt so you can control the amount.
- Experiment with sweet spices like cinnamon, hot spices like cayenne, and fresh herbs like cilantro.
- Look for low-sodium recipes online and in magazines.