

Avoid Hidden Sources of Sodium

Most of us take in more sodium through processed, packaged and restaurant foods than by using table salt. So here are a few things to know and do to avoid hidden sodium:

- Always look for “low-salt” or “low-sodium” labels on cans and packages. These labels mean the food has 140 milligrams of sodium or less per serving.
- “No added salt” means no salt was added during processing. Some foods labeled “no added salt” may contain less sodium than foods labeled “low-sodium,” but some may contain more.
- Always compare the sodium content for several similar foods and beverages and choose those with the lowest amount of sodium.
- Look for food packages labeled “sodium-free,” “salt-free,” “no sodium” and “very low sodium.”
- “Reduced-salt” or “reduced-sodium” means that the product has at least 25% less sodium than the original version. These foods may still have more sodium than you should eat.



Be sure to check the labels on these foods:

- Canned soups and dry soup mixes
- Canned meats and fish
- Ham, bacon and sausage
- Nuts and peanut butter
- Instant cooked cereals, such as grits
- Salted butter and margarine
- Processed meats, such as deli items and hot dogs
- Prepared baking mixes (pancake, muffin, cornbread, etc.)
- Packaged frozen dinners
- Preseasoned mixes (tacos, chili, rice, sauces, gravies, etc.)
- Snack foods (pretzels, potato chips, olives, pickles)
- Cheese
- Canned tomatoes or tomato sauces
- Salad dressings
- Fast food items

Many foods contain more than one form of sodium. The following ingredients mean that the product has sodium in it:

- Sodium alginate
- Sodium sulfite
- Sodium caseinate
- Disodium phosphate
- Sodium citrate
- Sodium benzoate
- Sodium hydroxide
- Monosodium glutamate or MSG
- Baking soda (or sodium bicarbonate)
- Baking powder

Some medicines are also high in sodium. Always read the sodium content and warnings before taking over-the-counter medicines. Avoid headache or heartburn medications that contain sodium carbonate or bicarbonate. And ask your health care professional or pharmacist to recommend over-the-counter medications that are best for you.