

Watching out for hidden sodium

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

It is well documented that, over time, a diet high in sodium can lead to many ill health effects, especially on the cardiovascular system. A high-sodium diet can also negate the effects of diuretics, an important treatment for hypertension.

The current recommendation for sodium intake is 2,300 milligrams (about 1 teaspoon) per day for healthy individuals, and 1,500 milligrams

a day for people with [high blood pressure](#), [kidney disease](#), [diabetes](#) and certain groups at high risk for these diseases. These recommendations include all sources of sodium—from salt naturally found in foods to salt added during processing, preparation or before eating.

Unfortunately, says Rachel Wagner, a registered dietitian with UC Health University Hospital, it can be very hard to follow a low-sodium diet. Processed foods, frozen dinners, canned vegetables/soups and many other foods that are in the typical American diet are all high in salt.

Wagner says we must help people to understand "hidden" sources of sodium and suggest lower sodium options.

Hidden sources include:

- Salad dressings
- Canned or jarred tomato sauces
- Cheeses
- Seasoned bread crumbs
- Flavoring packets
- Barbecue sauces
- Cereal

Other foods, especially items like condiments, might be recognized as high in sodium but could be higher than you think (1 tablespoon of soy sauce can contain 1,800 milligrams or more of sodium). Spices can even cause uncertainty, as many mixtures are really salt/spice blends.

"To avoid confusion," Wagner says, "make sure the label says 'salt/sodium free' or that salt is not listed in the ingredient list. It is also important to remember that kosher salt and sea salt are salt."

The amount of sodium listed on the food label is based on the stated

serving size. Wagner says that if the percentage of sodium, as listed on the food label, is 5 percent or less, the food will be lower in sodium.

Healthy Eating Alternatives

Eating fresh meat, poultry and fish instead of canned, processed or flavored/brined options will lower your [sodium intake](#), says Wagner. Choosing fresh, frozen or canned vegetables without added salt and avoiding flavored/creamed canned vegetables will also help. When choosing tuna, select vacuum-sealed varieties.

Try seasoning foods with spices and herbs. A good reference can be found from the American Heart Association (www.heart.org). Search for "shaking the salt habit" and then click the link for seasoning alternatives.

"While it may take some time to learn to prefer foods without salt, it will happen, and the health benefits make it well worth the effort," Wagner says.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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