

Identify and avoid hidden sodium

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You might know sodium as salt. It's found in many foods, but did you know that sometimes it's in foods that you might not expect it to be? When you have kidney disease, it's important to pay attention to how much sodium you eat.

We'll help you know the foods where sodium is hiding so you can avoid them — and stay on track with your healthy eating plan. Always talk to your care team or dietitian to find out how much sodium you should have each day.



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What is sodium?

Sodium is a mineral that makes up the bulk of table salt. Sodium is regulated by your kidneys, and it plays a big part in balancing the amount of fluids in your body. It sends nerve impulses and also affects how the nerves and muscles work.

What happens when your kidneys can't regulate sodium

Healthy kidneys keep the right level of sodium in your blood. But when kidneys fail, they can no longer remove extra sodium and fluid from your body. Having too much sodium and fluid buildup in your blood is dangerous because it raises your blood pressure.¹

When kidney function has declined, excess fluid may cause:

- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Swollen feet, legs, hands and face

Most Americans eat more sodium than they need.² Depending on your stage of chronic kidney disease (CKD), you may need to follow a low-sodium diet. A good way to start is to know which foods to avoid.

Foods to avoid

Salt and salt seasonings, such as celery salt, garlic salt, lemon pepper, "lite" salt, meat tenderizer and onion salt.

Lunch meats, such as cold cuts, corned beef, deli meats, hot dogs, pastrami, sausage and other canned or processed meats.

Cured and pickled foods, such as bacon, ham, herring, lox, olives, pickles and pickle relish, salt pork, sauerkraut, and all other pickled vegetables and fruits.



Salty snacks, such as crackers, corn chips, pretzels, potato chips, salted nuts, salted popcorn, salted sunflower seeds and tortilla chips.

Salad dressings and sauces, such as barbeque sauce, fish sauce, oyster sauce, soy sauce, steak sauce, teriyaki sauce, and bottled or powdered dressing mixes (for example, ranch, Thousand Island, Caesar, Italian and blue cheese).

Canned and processed foods, such as buttermilk, cheese, pasta sauce, soup, vegetables and vegetable juices.

Prepared, frozen and convenience foods, such as canned chili, ravioli, spaghetti, TV dinners, and boxed macaroni and cheese.

Fast food. Visit restaurant websites to find out the sodium content of menu items so you can choose what's best for you.

Sports drinks and some vegetable juices.

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About those substitutes

You may wonder about salt substitutes and if they're okay to have. Many salt substitutes contain the ingredient potassium chloride. Some people with CKD may need to limit how much

potassium they eat. Always check the label to make sure the product does not have potassium chloride.



Know which foods contain sodium and avoid them to stay healthy. Talk to your health care team if you have questions about how much sodium you can have.

¹Jackson SL, Cogswell ME, Zhao L et al. Association between urinary sodium and potassium excretion and blood pressure among adults in the United States. January 16, 2018. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2014 External. Circulation. Accessed March 3, 2022.

²Jackson SL, Coleman King SM, Zhao L et al. Prevalence of sodium intake in the United States. MMWR. 2016;64(52):1394–7. Accessed March 3, 2022.

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