



The Renal Diet: Sodium/Salt

Healthy kidneys get rid of extra sodium in the urine. When kidney disease occurs, the body is not able to get rid of sodium and it can build up. This extra sodium can lead to extra fluid staying in the body with swelling in the ankles, feet and legs, hands and face, increased weight, elevated blood pressure and possibly difficulty with breathing (shortness of breath).

Patients with high blood pressure (hypertension) and chronic kidney disease (CKD) often need to limit sodium or salt in their diet to keep their blood pressure under control and to prevent extra fluid from building up in the body and swelling.

Foods high in salt or sodium include the following:

- Fast foods
- Canned, processed or packaged foods
- Frozen dinners
- Ready-to-eat boxed meals
- Sauces, salad dressings, marinades and condiments
- Cured or salted meats such as hot dogs, bacon, ham, lunch meats and sausage
- Salt including kosher salt and sea salt
- Beware of products with hidden/added sodium: Look for word "sodium" on ingredient list, such as monosodium glutamate (MSG) or sodium nitrate

Cutting Down on Salt/Sodium: Recommended Guidelines:

- Limit sodium to 2,000 mg total per day. Consider keeping a record of your sodium intake.
- Remember that one teaspoon of salt contains 2,300 mg of sodium!
- Do not use salt for cooking or add salt to food at table (Take away salt shaker!)
- Beware of salt substitutes – they contain potassium and are not safe for kidney patients to use

- Look for foods with labels such as sodium free, salt free, low sodium, no salt added, unsalted or lightly salted.
- Read food labels for sodium content: Look at column with Percent Daily Value (%DV). The best food choices are foods with %DV of 5% or less. Avoid foods with DV% of 20% or greater because they contain too much salt.
- Buy fresh foods when possible and more often
- Prepare and cook your own foods from scratch, not prepared foods or boxed mixes
- Rinse canned foods (vegetables, beans, meats and fish) with water to remove extra sodium.

Instead of salt, BETTER ways to season your foods include:

- Use herbs such as rosemary, thyme, basil, cumin, and pepper
- Season with garlic (not garlic salt), onions, syrup (pancakes and waffles), caramel, vinegar, lemon and lime juice
- Look at Mrs. Dash products (a variety of salt-free seasonings)