

Limiting Your Salt Intake

The body tries to keep all of its minerals in the right concentration. The sodium, or salt concentration in the bloodstream is included. When extra salt is eaten in any form, the body holds on to extra water, in order to achieve the right balance.

In most people, all of this extra fluid is passed out in the urine. But for those whose hearts are a bit weak or for unexplained reasons, the process is less efficient. In these instances, the excess water and salt are retained, building up in the places we don't want, such as the legs, resulting in swelling. Of more danger, sometimes the buildup of fluid occurs in the lungs, causing shortness of breath - a dangerous condition called congestive heart failure. Additionally, even with normal hearts, added dietary salt causes fluid retention and increased blood pressure.

Our body requires very little salt, but the typical American diet contains lots of it. In people with even healthy hearts, this excessive salt intake can be harmful, raising the blood pressure. Although we can get by with much, much less, the typical American diet contains at least 5 or 6 grams (5,000 or 6,000 milligrams, or mg.). Salt consumption needs to be reduced by at least half in those with reduced heart function.

Eliminating foods that are high in salt will result in a reduction of intake to around 3,000mg (3 grams) of sodium. For most people, this will suffice in preventing repeated bouts of congestive heart failure. It may also enable the blood pressure to fall. With so many foods now bearing labels containing the sodium, or salt content, it is now relatively easy to determine how much salt you are consuming.

The following is a list of foods and additives to avoid. When in doubt, remember that if it tastes salty, it is! (Remember also that **Sea Salt is no better** than regular table salt. Its only "advantage" is that it contains some other minerals in very small amounts.)

1. Salt at the table. Any!
2. Canned soups and vegetables
3. Luncheon and salt-preserved meats – bacon, bologna, turkey, hotdogs, corned beef, ham, sausage
4. Salted snack foods – chips, nuts, crackers, pretzels, popcorn
5. Condiments – garlic salt, celery salt, pickles, soy sauce, prepared meat sauce, relish, prepared mustard