



# Nutrition Tip of the Week

March 18, 2009

## What you need to know about sodium

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### What is sodium?

- Sodium is a component of table salt and it is naturally found in most foods, including processed foods

### Role of Sodium in the Body

- Sodium helps keep body fluids balanced
- Plays a key role in normal nerve and muscle function

### Statistics and Recommended Sodium Intake

- The average American consumes about 6 to 18 grams of salt daily
- The American Heart Association recommends consuming less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day which equals about 6 grams (1 teaspoon) of table salt a day
  - The recommended amount of 2,300 mg includes sodium found naturally in foods, processed foods, and table salt

### Why is it important to reduce sodium intake?

- People with high blood pressure are at higher risk of developing heart disease and stroke therefore reducing sodium consumption may help reduce or avoid high blood pressure

### Tips on reducing sodium intake

- Limit the consumption of highly processed, smoked, pickled, and cured foods
- Use herbs and spices instead of salt during preparation and cooking of foods
- Choose frozen and canned vegetables without added salt when fresh ones are not available
- Choose foods labeled "low-sodium," "reduced sodium" or "sodium free"

Mckinley Health Center. Reducing the sodium in your diet. [http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu/Handouts/reducing\\_sodium\\_diet.html](http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu/Handouts/reducing_sodium_diet.html). Accessed March 18, 2007.  
American Heart Association. Shake you salt habit. <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=2106>. Accessed March 18, 2007.

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