

It's important to understand how to control your sodium intake—even if you don't have high blood pressure. That's because just a single high-sodium meal can significantly increase blood pressure for several hours and cause oxidative stress.<sup>1</sup> In response, your arteries may stiffen, increasing blood pressure, making your heart work harder.

Luckily, the FirstLine Therapy meal plan was designed to keep your sodium intake within healthy limits. In addition to exercise and stress management strategies, the plan supports healthy blood pressure in multiple ways. And if this way of eating is new to you, don't worry. Your taste buds will adapt to less sodium, usually within a couple of weeks.

- The FirstLine Therapy plan limits the most sodium-filled food items from the typical American diet (processed foods, prepared foods, and unhealthy restaurant choices).
- With a broad array of plant foods, you'll get adequate naturally occurring sodium, an essential mineral, to provide for your body's needs.
- Your food choices are rich in potassium, complex carbohydrates, essential fatty acids, fiber, calcium, magnesium, and vitamin C, all of which support healthy blood pressure.

## At the grocery store

- When it comes to produce, fresh and locally grown options are best. But frozen vegetables or berries can be a great option as well. If buying canned items, select those with no added salt or sugar.
- Use fresh or frozen poultry, fish, pork, and lean meat, rather than canned, cured, salted, or other processed meats. Check the ingredient list and avoid any added sodium, salt, or salt water.
- Limit sauces, mixes, and "instant" products, including flavored rice and ready-made pasta meals.
- Compare nutrition facts labels on food packages and be familiar with the meaning of the various sodium-related claims you'll find (see inset). Ideally, look for items labeled salt/sodium-free, very low sodium, or low sodium.
- Check the ingredient panel and watch for these additives and food preservatives:
  - Monosodium glutamate (MSG)—often used to enhance food flavor
  - Disodium phosphate—often found in quick-cook cereals and processed cheeses
  - Any other ingredient with "sodium" in its name

## Dining out

- Ask for nutrition information before you order and select one of the lower-sodium dishes
- Stick with fruits or vegetables with no salt added as a side item
- Bring your own salt-free seasonings to flavor your food

## At home

- When cooking, use alternative seasonings to replace or reduce the amount of salt. Experiment with garlic, onion powder, lemon juice, vinegar, or salt-free seasonings, such as:
  - Bell's® All Natural Salt-Free Seasoning
  - Bragg® Organic Sprinkle Herb & Spice Seasoning
  - Mrs. Dash® Salt-Free Seasonings
- Add dried herbs, spices, or spice blends to soup, stews, poultry, or fish early in the cooking process to allow the flavors to develop fully. Add fresh herbs at the end of cooking.
- If using salt, use sea salt, which contains beneficial trace minerals. You'll find it has more flavor, so you'll need less!
- Limit added salt while cooking and taste the food first before salting it at the table.
- Add toasted seeds and nuts (in accordance with your food plan) for crunch and nutty flavor.
- Use a squeeze or splash of fresh citrus juice to enhance vegetables, poultry, fish, and soups.

What It Says <sup>2</sup>	What It Means
Salt/sodium-free	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
Very low sodium	35 mg of sodium or less per serving
Low sodium	140 mg of sodium or less per serving
Reduced sodium	At least 25% less sodium than the regular product
Light in sodium or lightly salted	At least 50% less sodium than the regular product
No salt added or unsalted	No salt is added during processing—but these products may not be salt- or sodium-free unless stated

## References

1. Dickinson KM et al. Postprandial effects of a high salt meal on serum sodium, arterial stiffness, markers of nitric oxide production and markers of endothelial function. *Atherosclerosis*. 2014;232(1):211-216.
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## High blood pressure—a “silent killer”

High blood pressure (or hypertension) puts extra strain on your heart, increasing your risk for heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is the leading risk factor for death and disability in the world,<sup>2</sup> affecting one in three Americans.<sup>3</sup> High blood pressure is considered a “silent killer” because it has no warning signs or symptoms, so many people with high blood pressure don’t know they have it. Even without a diagnosis of hypertension, in general, the lower one’s blood pressure, the lower the risk of heart disease and stroke.<sup>1</sup>

## Sodium and blood pressure

Luckily, you can control the biggest contributors to blood pressure. While exercising and maintaining a healthy body weight can significantly lower blood pressure, dietary sodium is the most important factor to control. In fact, about 90% of Americans aged 2 years or older eat too much sodium, nearly 50% more (3,400 mg) than the recommended limit of 2,300 mg per day!<sup>4</sup> So it’s no mystery why cardiovascular disease is so common in our country. Where does all this sodium come from?

## Sources of sodium in the Standard American Diet

More than 75% of the sodium we consume comes from restaurant, prepackaged, and processed foods.<sup>5</sup> This often includes foods that may not taste salty to you. That’s where it gets tricky.

You can’t rely on taste. Sodium may be added in the form of salt (sodium chloride) to enhance flavor. But in other forms, sodium may be added to preserve freshness or to improve texture and appearance. Therefore, you might be surprised to learn that 44% of sodium intake comes from just 10 types of commonly eaten foods.

## Be sodium savvy<sup>6</sup>

- **Breads and rolls**—One serving has around 230 mg. But, because most people have multiple servings each day, it adds up quickly.
- **Cold cuts and cured meats**—These items often have sodium added as a preservative. One serving may have as much as 1,050 mg of sodium! So be sure to avoid processed meat.
- **Pizza**—Just one slice may have as much as 760 mg of sodium. Limit your intake and select options without cheese and topped with vegetables.
- **Chicken**—Some birds are all pumped up—and not in a good way! Poultry is often plumped up with a salt water, which can make a 3-oz. serving have nearly 600 mg of sodium. Select poultry with no more than 25 mg of sodium per ounce.
- **Soup**—Commercial chicken soup may have as much as 940 mg of sodium in a single cup. Even with lower-sodium options, make sure to read the label—or make your own!
- **Seasoning mixes**—Many store-bought seasoning packets are mostly salt. In fact, two teaspoons of packaged taco seasoning can have over 400 mg of sodium. Instead, make your own blend!

## Almost half the sodium we eat comes from just 10 types of foods<sup>5</sup>



**Breads and rolls**



**Cheese**



**Cold cuts and cured meats**



**Pasta dishes**



**Pizza**



**Meat dishes**



**Poultry**



**Packaged snacks**



**Sandwiches**



**Soup**

## Try the following blend instead of a seasoning packet

1 Tbsp. chili powder

¼ tsp. garlic powder\*

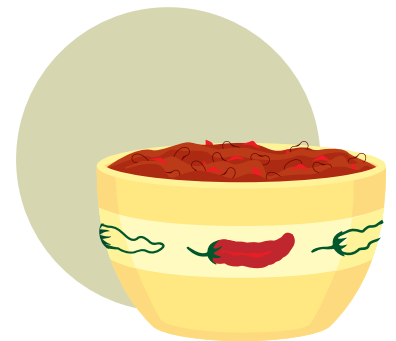
¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

1 tsp. paprika

2 tsp. ground cumin

½–1 tsp. sea salt

\* Or add 1 clove garlic, minced



## References

1. Chobanian AV et al. The seventh report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure: the JNC 7 report. *JAMA*. 2003;289(19):2572.
2. Bromfield S et al. High blood pressure: the leading global burden of disease risk factor and the need for worldwide prevention programs. *Curr Hypertens Rep*. 2013;15(3): 134-136.
3. Roger VL et al. Heart disease and stroke statistics 2011 update: a report from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2011;123: e18-e209.
4. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2015-2020, Eighth Edition. <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines>. Accessed March 1, 2017.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Vital signs: food categories contributing the most to sodium consumption—United States, 2007–2008. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6105a3.htm> Accessed March 2, 2017.
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