



TEREDESAI, McCANN & ASSOCIATES, P.C.
Hypertension and Kidney Specialists

P.R. TEREDESAI, M.D., F.A.C.P.
J.E. McCANN, D.O.
A.I. WOLFERT, M.D.
Q. XIE, M.D., Ph.D.

M.G. PESACRETA, M.D.
E.B. BAHTA, M.D.
J.C. SYSAK, D.O.
N.D. PATEL, M.D.

A. J. KARAMBELKAR, M.D.
S. HE, M.D., Ph.D.
E. KURTZ, M.D.
S. TOROK, CRNP

Lifestyle Adjustments

[*Lowering Salt Intake](#) – [*Exercise](#) – [*Smoking](#)

Lowering Salt Intake

Why You Should Lower Your Sodium Intake

Your doctor has told you to cut down on your salt or sodium intake. Although sodium is a mineral that is essential for good health, too much sodium can contribute to health problems. So you ask yourself how much is too much? The average American consumes more than twice the amount of salt recommended. We would like you to keep your sodium level at 2 GM or 2,000 mg daily. Reducing your amount of sodium may help you avoid high blood pressure or help to normalize your blood pressure. People with high blood pressure are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke. Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States.

Learn To Identify Your Sodium Sources

Cooking without salt and not using the salt shaker at the table are two important steps in identifying and lowering your sodium intake. Many foods of animal origin such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and milk are rather high in natural sodium. Foods of vegetable origin are generally low in natural sodium. Since most of the sodium in our diet is added during the processing of foods, you must be aware of both natural sodium content and added sodium content. When reading labels on prepackaged and processed foods be aware of the words soda and sodium and the symbol NA, these identify the sodium compounds.

When Reading Labels

- Know your daily sodium allowance
- Check the serving size
- Compare labels of similar products
- Remember just because a product states that it is low in sodium, it can be misleading, it may contain more sodium than your allowance



Hints For Lowering Your Sodium Intake

- Limit the use of added salt both during preparation and at the table
- Substitute spices and herbs for table salt to flavor foods
- Use substitutes that are low in sodium, such as: black pepper, fresh garlic, fresh onion, garlic and onion powder
- Avoid the spices that are high in sodium, such as: garlic salt, onion salt, sea salt, and MSG.
- Read food labels and choose those foods low in sodium
- Limit your use of foods that are canned, cured, and processed with salt
- Avoid or limit fast foods, lunch meats, instant foods, packaged foods, and frozen dinners
- Limit or avoid salty snacks such as: nuts, potato chips, corn chips, and crackers

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Exercise

Exercise is important for many reasons:

- It helps you lose excess weight and keep the weight off
- It helps prevent diseases including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and chronic kidney disease.
- It helps prevent high blood cholesterol
- It helps build strength and endurance
- Helps prevent injuries

Many types of exercise can benefit your health:

Walking, sports, household chores, aerobic exercises are a few. Anyone can exercise, although it is important that the type of exercise you do is appropriate.

If you have any chronic illnesses, it is important to discuss which type of exercise is best for you with your physician before you start.



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If you haven't exercised for a while, you should start out with mild exercises for 10-15 minutes a day. Gradually add more strenuous exercises and extend the time until you reach 30-60 minutes most days of the week.

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Smoking

Smoking is an important risk factor that can make kidney disease worse. Heavy smoking will work against you if you are trying to keep your kidney function as long as possible. Smoking increases high blood pressure and cardiovascular risks, two health problems that often occur with kidney disease. You will be taking better care of yourself if you can reduce or quit smoking. Talk to your primary care doctor about medication options and nicotine replacement therapy, as well as counseling or support to help you quit smoking.

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