

# 5 ways to use less salt

Sodium chloride (salt) is essential to the body. The sodium in salt helps transmit nerve impulses and contract muscle fibres. Working with potassium, it balances fluid levels in the body. But you only need a tiny amount of salt to do this, less than one-tenth of a teaspoon. The body can generally rid itself of excess sodium. In some people, though, consuming extra sodium makes the body hold onto water. This increases the amount of fluid flowing through blood vessels, which can increase blood pressure.

Most of the salt consumed comes from prepared and processed foods. The leading culprits include snack foods, sandwich meats, smoked and cured meat, canned juices, canned and dry soups, pizza and other fast foods, and many condiments, relishes, and sauces — for starters. But enough comes from the salt shaker that it's worth finding alternatives. Here are 5 ways to cut back on sodium when cooking or at the table:

**1. USE SPICES AND OTHER FLAVOUR ENHANCERS.** Add flavour to your favourite dishes with spices, dried and fresh herbs, roots (such as garlic and ginger), citrus, vinegars, and wine. From black pepper, cinnamon, and turmeric to fresh basil, chili peppers, and lemon juice, these flavour enhancers create excitement for the palate — and with less sodium.



**2. GO NUTS FOR HEALTHY FATS IN THE KITCHEN.** Using the right healthy fats — from roasted nuts and avocados to olive, canola, soybean, and other oils — can add a rich flavour to foods, minus the salt.



**3. SEAR, SAUTÉ, AND ROAST.** Searing and sautéing foods in a pan builds flavour. Roasting brings out the natural sweetness of many vegetables and the taste of fish and chicken. If you do steam or microwave food, perk up these dishes with a finishing drizzle of flavourful oil and a squeeze of citrus.

**4. GET YOUR WHOLE GRAINS FROM SOURCES OTHER THAN BREAD.** Even whole-grain bread, while a healthier choice than white, can contain considerable sodium. Instead try a Mediterranean-inspired whole-grain salad with chopped vegetables, nuts, and legumes, perhaps a small amount of cheese, herbs and spices, and healthy oils and vinegar or citrus. For breakfast, cook up steel-cut oats or other intact whole grains with fresh or dried fruit, and you can skip the toast (and the



**5. KNOW YOUR SEASONS, AND, EVEN BETTER, YOUR LOCAL FARMER.** Shop for raw ingredients with maximum natural flavour, thereby avoiding the need to add as much (if any) sodium. Shop for peak-of-season produce from farmers' markets and your local supermarket.