

Patient information on a Low Sodium Diet (Part I)

Who is this information for?

This information is for patients, families and carers of patients undertaking a low sodium diet for the prevention of Meniere disease and other vestibular disorders.

What is sodium?

- Sodium is an element that is found in many foods as well as water.
- It is the main constituent of Table Salt.
- The body needs a very small amount of sodium to work normally, but most people eat much more sodium than their body needs.

Who should cut down on sodium?

- Nearly everyone eats too much sodium. The average Australian takes in 3,400 milligrams of sodium each day.
- Experts say that many people should have no more than 2,300 milligrams a day, and many people should have even less.
- For Meniere Disease, your doctor will recommend a sodium intake of less than 1000 – 2000 mg a day.

Why should I cut down on sodium?

- There are many general health related benefits to a reduction in sodium intake such as lower blood pressure, decreased kidney stress, decreased chance a kidney stones and decreased peripheral soft tissue swelling.
- With respect to Meniere Disease, a lower sodium intake may reduce the frequency and severity of attacks.

Which foods have the most sodium?

- Processed foods have the most sodium.
 - These foods usually come in cans, boxes, jars, and bags.
 - They tend to have a lot of sodium even if they don't taste salty.
 - In fact, many sweet foods have a lot of sodium in them.
 - The only way to know for sure how much sodium you are getting is to check the label

What should I do to reduce the amount of sodium in my diet?

- Many people think that avoiding the salt shaker and not adding salt to their food means that they are eating a low-sodium diet. ***This is not true.***
- Not adding salt at the table or when cooking will help a little. But almost all of the sodium you eat is already in the food you buy at the grocery store or at restaurants

Tips to Reduce Salt:

1. Choose low sodium foods

- Buy more fresh or fresh-frozen, unprocessed foods
- See table below.
- If you must buy canned or packaged foods, choose foods:
 - labeled “low Salt” or “No added Salt” - ***N.B. Some foods labeled “reduced salt” can still contain high levels of Sodium***
- Check the nutrition panel - choose foods that have:
 - less than 400mg of Sodium ***per serve.***
 - Less than 150mg ***per 100mg***

Nutrition Information		
Servings per package:1		
Serving Size:35g		
	Per Serve	Per 100g
Energy	501kJ	1430kJ
Protein	3.5g	10g
Fat	0.4g	1g
Saturated fat	0.2g	0.5g
Carbohydrate		
Total	25.3g	72.2g
Sugar	7.5g	21.5g
Fibre	3.4g	9.7g
Sodium	185mg	535mg

2. Do not add salt at the table or in cooking

- What to use instead:
 - Freshly ground pepper, dry mustard powder
 - Lemon juice, lime juice, vinegar
 - A sprinkle of dried herbs
 - Chopped fresh herbs: basil, oregano, mint, rosemary, thyme, parsley, chives, sage, tarragon
 - Garlic, curry, chilli, onion, fresh ginger, spring onions
 - Alcohol in cooking
 - Spices: nutmeg, ginger, cinnamon, cumin, cardamom

3. Decrease the number of times you eat out.

- You can still eat in restaurants once in a while.
- But choose places that offer healthier choices.
- Fast-food places are almost always a bad idea.
 - As an example, a typical meal of a hamburger and french fries from a popular fast-food chain has about 1,600 milligrams of sodium. That's more sodium than many people should eat in a day!
- Ask the waiter if your meal can be made without added salt
- Avoid foods that come with sauces and dips
- Choose plain grilled meats or fish and steamed vegetables.
- Ask for oil and vinegar for your salad rather than dressing

4. Clearing up some myths about sodium (salt)

- ***Do you need extra salt if you sweat a lot?***
 - The body is very good at keeping the amount of salt it needs.
 - You need fluid (preferably water), at least 1.5L daily, even more if you are very active and sweating a lot.
- ***Does extra salt stop cramps?***
 - Cramps are not due to a lack of salt.
 - Drinking enough fluid and always warming up before exercise can help
 - Also check that your calcium intake is adequate.

5. Count your sodium

- Aim to have **< 2,300mg of sodium each day.**
- The table below provides a general guide
- Any food with **> 150mg sodium per serve** should be limited.

6. Make Changes slowly

- Choose one thing to do differently, and do that for a while. If that change sticks, add another change.
- For instance, if you usually eat green beans from a can, try buying fresh or fresh-frozen green beans and cooking them at home without adding salt. If that works for you, keep doing it. Then choose another thing to change.
- If it doesn't work, don't give up. See if you can cut down on sodium another way.
- The important thing is to take small steps and to stick with the changes that work for you.

Do medicines have sodium?

- Yes, some medicines have sodium.
- If you are buying medicines you can get without a prescription, look to see how much sodium they have.
- Avoid products that have "sodium carbonate" or "sodium bicarbonate" unless your doctor prescribes them. (Sodium bicarbonate is baking soda.)

Concerns or questions?

You can contact your ENT Specialist at the Melbourne ENT Group (MEG):

- Phone: 1300- 952-808
- Email: admin@melbentgroup.com.au
- Website: www.melbentgroup.com.au



Your GP is also the best contact for ongoing care and concerns.



1300 952 808



(03) 9429 3627



MELBENTGROUP.COM.AU



G2/173 LENNOX STREET, RICHMOND VIC 3121

ABN 88 181 798 030