

# life is why **Family Health Challenge**™

## Breaking Up with Excess Sodium

### *What can I do to reduce the sodium I eat?*

Here are some of our favorite break-up tips:

- Compare labels and choose the product with the lowest amount of sodium you can find in your store. You might be surprised that different brands of the same food can have different sodium levels.
- Look for products with the American Heart Association's Heart-Check mark at grocery stores and some restaurants to find foods to help you build a heart-healthy diet. The red and white icon means that a product meets the Heart-Check program's nutrition requirements for certification, including specific sodium limits by food category. To learn more about the Heart-Check Food Certification Program, visit [www.heartcheckmark.org](http://www.heartcheckmark.org).
- Look for fresh and frozen poultry that hasn't been injected with a sodium solution. Check the fine print on the packaging and look for terms such as "broth," "saline" or "sodium solution." Sodium levels in unseasoned fresh meats are around 100 mg or less per 4-ounce serving.
- Cook at home more. Use herbs, spices, citrus juices and vinegars instead of salt to add flavor to foods. Our recipes and tips can help!
- Choose condiments carefully. For example, soy sauce, bottled salad dressings, dips, ketchup, salsas, mustard, pickles, olives and relish can be sky-high in sodium.
- Control portion sizes. When you cut calories, you usually cut the sodium too.
- Choose foods with potassium, like sweet potatoes, potatoes, greens, tomatoes and lower-sodium tomato sauce, white beans, kidney beans, nonfat yogurt, oranges, bananas and cantaloupe. Potassium helps counter the effects of sodium and may help lower your blood pressure.
- Specify how you want your food prepared when dining out. Ask for your dish to be prepared without salt.

As you take steps to reduce sodium gradually, you'll start to appreciate foods for their true flavor. And over time, your taste buds can adjust to prefer less salt. Studies have shown that when people are given a lower sodium diet for a period of time, they begin to prefer lower-sodium foods and the foods they used to enjoy taste too salty.

### *What is the American Heart Association doing to help us break up with excess salt?*

We commend manufacturers and restaurants that have already taken steps to reduce the sodium content in their foods.

Successful sodium reduction requires action and partnership at all levels — individuals, healthcare providers, professional organizations, public health agencies, governments and industry. Here are a few things that the American Heart Association is doing to help:

- encouraging manufacturers to reduce the amount of sodium in the food supply;
- advocating for more healthy foods, like fruits and vegetables, to be available and accessible; and
- providing consumers with education and decision-making tools to make better food choices.

For more recipes and sodium tips, visit [www.heart.org/sodium](http://www.heart.org/sodium).

