

SODIUM

What is it? - The words “salt” and “sodium” are not the same thing. Sodium (*symbol Na+*) is a mineral & along with Chloride (*Cl*) it combines to make salt. Salt (*NaCl*) is a compound found in nature. It is used to flavor and preserve food. Salt (*NaCl*) is the biggest source of sodium (*Na+*) in our diet.

What does it do? - Sodium (*Na+*) is an “essential” nutrient. We need some in our diet to carry out certain functions in the body, such as maintaining fluid balance, transmitting nerve impulses & helping muscles to relax or contract. It also plays a role in digestion and respiration.

Sodium in our diet - Sodium (*Na+*) occurs naturally in many foods, so we actually don’t have to try too hard to get what we need. It is really a nutrient we need to get less of! Too much sodium may increase our risk of developing high blood pressure, cardiovascular & kidney disease.

How much should we eat? - The overall recommendation is to consume no more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day for most Americans. Adults with certain medical conditions may need to further reduce intake to 1,500 mg/day. Most Americans exceed these recommendations!

Meals on Wheels - The hot meals provide on average ~905 mg of sodium per meal. This includes the sodium in the entrée, vegetable side, starch component, dessert, sliced bread & milk combined. Some meals may be higher & some lower, but they may never go over 1,500 mg more than 2x’s each month.

Recommendations:

- Ask your doctor to recommend a sodium amount for your specific intake each day.
- If your doctor states to just “**watch your sodium,**” follow the Dietary Guidelines & keep your intake below 2,300 mg a day.
- Choose fresh, unprocessed foods & cook at home more often. Buy foods labeled “No Added Salt.” Limit salty snacks & fast food. Use herbs & spices to flavor food. Read your food labels. Snack on fruits & veggies.
- Look for the (**Na+**) symbol on the *Meals on Wheels* menu to manage your overall daily totals. Sodium is listed for each food item to the right of the item & the total sodium in the meal is listed at the bottom of each meal.
- Using the example below, the total sodium in the meal is 1422mg. (2,300mg – 1422mg = **878mg**). The remaining 878 mg of sodium can be divided between your other 2 meals that day. You might also save an item to eat later in the day. (1422mg Meal Total – 370 mg if you save the Soda Bread for later = **1052mg**). This meal now has 1052mg of sodium. (2,300mg – 1052mg = 1,248mg left for your other meals & snacks that day).
- If you have a question about sodium & the Meals on Wheels, contact our Nutritionist for guidance.

16 Happy St. Pat's Eve!	
High sodium day indicator	HIGH SODIUM MEAL**
	Corned Beef (624*)
	Cabbage (20)
	Boiled Potatoes (6)
	Carrots (77)
	Irish Soda Bread (370)
	Shamrock Cupcake (170)
	Diet: Green Jello (8)
Total calories for meal	Cal: 781 Na+: 1422mg

Asterisk indicating item >500 mg sodium

Sodium content of individual item

Total Sodium for meal (including milk)