University of Virginia HEALTH SYSTEM

LOW SODIUM SNACK IDEAS FOR GAINING WEIGHT

Limiting the amount of sodium or salt in your diet is important for good health and even more important when you have a condition such as liver, heart, or kidney disease. These conditions call for a restriction of sodium because too much sodium in your diet can cause excess fluid build-up in your body. This fluid build-up can occur in your hands, ankles, belly, and lungs, and it can complicate your condition, not to mention the fact that it can be very uncomfortable. Oftentimes patients with liver, heart, or kidney disease find it hard to keep their weight up, which makes it harder to keep their strength up. It is important to incorporate low sodium, high calorie/protein snacks into your day in order to keep you strong.

How Much Sodium is too Much?

- The recommended intake of sodium for those with liver, heart, or kidney disease is 2,000 milligrams (mg) or less per day. If you consume more than this in a day, your body may start to retain excess fluid.
- One teaspoon of salt contains 2,000-2,400 mg of sodium! This is why you are advised to stay away from the salt shaker.
- Try to choose food items with 140-200 mg of sodium per serving
- If you're worried about losing some of the taste in your food, remember that salt is an acquired taste. For added flavor try incorporating fresh herbs and spices such as garlic, onion, basil, thyme, or oregano into your recipes.

What to Look for When Reading Food Labels:

Label Term	Meaning
Sodium-Free	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
Very Low Sodium	35 mg or less of sodium per serving
Low Sodium	140 mg or less of sodium per serving
Reduced or less sodium	At least 25% less sodium than a serving size of the original product
Unsalted, no salt added, without added salt	May contain sodium as a natural part of the food, but no additional sodium or salt is added during processing

Tips for Increasing Calories:

- Eat six small frequent meals throughout the day
- Prepare your favorite dishes and invite friends over to enjoy it with you
- Plan your meals around your energy levels – eat breakfast as your biggest meal if you are most energetic in the mornings
- Eat a variety of foods
- Increase your portion sizes at each meal, as long as it does not exceed your sodium restriction
- Try liquid supplements such as Ensure, Boost, or Carnation Instant Breakfast – be sure to look at the food label to see how much sodium these contain!
- Make your own fruit smoothies and fortify them with yogurt and/or milk powder

Examples for Building Low Sodium Snacks

- Make your own trail mix: 1 cup unsalted popcorn, ¼ cup unsalted peanuts (or your favorite nut - **unsalted**), ¼ cup raisins, ¼ cup plain M&M's = **450 kcal, 50 mg sodium**
- 1 slice of bread, 2 Tbsp low sodium or natural peanut butter, ½ banana = **300 kcal, 200 mg sodium**
- Homemade fruit smoothie: 1 cup frozen strawberries, 1 frozen banana, ½ cup orange juice, 1 cup yogurt = **330 kcal, 140 mg sodium**
- 6 unsalted crackers w/ 2 Tbsp low sodium or natural peanut butter = **250 kcal, 130 mg sodium**
- 1 small bagel w/ 2 Tbsp cream cheese = **260 kcal, 280 mg sodium**
- 1 slice of bread, 1 Tbsp honey, 1 cup whole milk = **200 kcal, 265 mg sodium**
- 6 unsalted crackers, 3 oz. drained and rinsed tuna, 1 Tbsp. Miracle Whip Salad Dressing, 1 cup raw carrots = **200 kcal, 300 mg sodium**
- 1 small baked potato w/ 1 Tbsp light sour cream and 1 Tbsp salsa = **150 kcal, 150 mg sodium**
- Carnation Instant Breakfast made w/ 2% milk = **250 kcal, 150 mg sodium**
- 1 cup pasta w/ 2 Tbsp olive oil, fresh herbs, and 1 oz. shredded mozzarella = **450 kcal, 170 mg sodium**
- 15 unsalted pretzels w/ ½ cup pudding (not instant) = **250 kcal, 150 mg sodium**
- 1 cup regular yogurt w/ ¼ cup strawberries and ¼ cup granola = **250 kcal, 220 mg sodium**

The Language of Labels

Any combination of the above will work as long as you are reading "Nutrition Facts" labels and keeping track of the amount of sodium that you are consuming. Food labels are the best source of consumer information in terms of giving you specific nutrient information. One of the nutrients always present on the food label is sodium. These steps can help you determine how many calories and sodium a certain product contains:

1. **Start with the servings** – The label gives you the serving size and the number of servings in the package. The Nutrition Facts apply to the serving size (amount for one serving) on the label, and not necessarily to the whole box or container. Remember, if the serving size is 1 cup and you consume 2 cups of that product, you must multiply everything by 2 in order to accurately assess the amount consumed.

2. **Look at the ingredients** – Be aware of products that list "salt", "sodium", and "monosodium glutamate" as one of the first five ingredients.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 2 crackers (14 g)
Servings Per Container About 21

Amount Per Serving

Calories 60 Calories from Fat 15

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 1.5g	**2%**
Saturated Fat 0g	**0%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 70mg	**3%**
Total Carbohydrate 10g	**3%**
Dietary Fiber Less than 1g	**3%**
Sugars 0g	
Protein 2g	

Vitamin A 0% • Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 0% • Iron 2%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2400mg	2400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Which Foods Should You Avoid?

The following are foods that are extremely high in sodium. You should try to limit these foods in your diet as much as possible. **Be sure to look at the label--many of these products offer reduced sodium varieties.**

- Processed deli meats
- Sausage
- Bacon
- Hot dogs
- Canned meats
- Smoked or cured meats
- Breaded meats
- Processed cheese products (Cheez Wiz, Velveeta, etc.)
- Pickles
- Regular canned vegetables and vegetable juices
- Olives
- Biscuits
- Salted snack foods
- Seasoned rice
- Noodle or potato mixes
- Salt pork
- Fat back
- Regular salad dressings
- Salt
- Bouillon
- Seasoning salts
- Soy sauce
- Worcestershire sauce
- Regular canned soups
- Dry soup mixes
- Frozen meals
- Fast food