

Salt is a paradox. Made up of two deadly poisons – sodium and chlorine – sodium chloride (salt, when it's at home) is both essential to our existence and dangerous to our health.

A certain amount of sodium is required to keep our bodies in balance. Without the correct balance of water to sodium in our bloodstreams, we can become ill. In a healthy human system, excess sodium is eliminated through the kidneys to keep this balance.

Too much sodium has been linked to high blood pressure. If you have a family history of high blood pressure or have developed it, your health care provider may recommend a low sodium diet. Other conditions, such as congestive heart failure, may make it difficult for your body to process sodium, and your health care provider may recommend a low sodium diet.

The American Heart Association recommends sodium consumption be limited to 1,500 mg per day – a little more than 1/2 teaspoon of salt.

A “no sodium” diet is very difficult, because most unprocessed foods naturally contain some sodium. A cup of raw cauliflower, for example, has 30mg of sodium.

A “low sodium” diet is much easier – just eliminate processed foods! According to the Mayo Clinic, the main sources of sodium in the American diet are: 5% added while cooking, 6% added while eating, 12% naturally occurring, 77% added in processing. When reading prepared food labels, look out for “salt”, “sodium” and “Na” as well as:

- \* Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- \* Baking soda
- \* Baking powder
- \* Disodium phosphate
- \* Sodium alginate
- \* Sodium nitrate

Because most of us need some prepared foods now and then, see our Low Sodium Shopping List below.

Once you start reducing sodium in your diet, you'll find it difficult to eat “regular” processed foods – the amount of sodium in, say, conventional canned chicken noodle soup will make your mouth feel like it's on fire!

As an alternative to mere salt as a flavoring, consider these options, all without added sodium

### **Herb Butter**

*Use any herb you like to make this delicious spread - basil is a good one to start with. This is a great way to use up bits of leftover herbs.*

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened  
1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice  
3 Tbsp. chopped fresh herbs (basil, thyme, etc.)

Cream the butter and lemon juice together. Add the herbs and mix gently. Pack into a small container and refrigerate until needed. Will keep 2 weeks in the refrigerator.

Serve over steamed vegetables, or use in sauteing. Mushroom caps filled with a bit of butter and run over the broiler are delicious.

### **Craig's Favorite Dressing**

1 cup white wine vinegar  
1 cup good olive oil  
1 clove garlic, peeled and smashed  
1 thick slice onion  
1 tsp. dried fines herbes

Mix everything together in a salad dressing bottle (cut onion slice in half and thread onion rings into bottle.) Let stand at least one hour. Shake vigorously immediately before using. Keeps several weeks in the refrigerator. If it becomes too strong, add more vinegar and oil in equal amounts.

### **Gremolata**

*Gremolata is a handy seasoning mixture to be added to sauces, soups, etc. for the last few minutes of cooking. It's a handy way to brighten up food that lacks a certain something.*

2 Tbsp. finely minced parsley  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1/2 tsp. finely minced lemon rind

For soups or sauces, add to hot liquid for the last two minutes of cooking; simmer over very low heat, preferably covered. Or add to pasta or potatoes immediately after draining and adding any sauce. You may store this, tightly covered, for a day or two.

For More Information:

American Heart Association  
[http://www.deliciousdecisions.org/ee/wbd\\_sodi\\_main.html](http://www.deliciousdecisions.org/ee/wbd_sodi_main.html)

Mayo Clinic  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/invoke.cfm?id=NU00284>

National Institutes of Health  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/dietarysodium.html>