

American Heart Association.  
EmPOWERED to Serve™

**AMGEN**  
Cardiology

# Break Up with Excess Sodium

#EmPOWERChange

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Kick off your program with a warm welcome and your opening remarks. This could include an inspiring quote or reading or share with the group why this topic is important to you and your reason for offering to host this lesson.

## **BREAK UP WITH EXCESS SODIUM** | Lesson Overview

### **Welcome**

- What is EmPOWERED to Serve™?
- Program Topic and Urgent Community Need

### **Health Lesson**

- Understand how sodium affects your health
- Learn about common sources of sodium (salt)
- Identify steps to help reduce your sodium intake

### **Closing Thoughts**

- Your Voice Matters
- Online Resources



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Get everyone focused by reading through the lesson overview.

Let participants know that the lesson takes 30 minutes to complete.

## WHAT IS EMPOWERED TO SERVE?

**EmPOWERED to Serve is a movement inspiring those who are passionate about driving change through health justice in their communities.**

We are catalysts for change, empowering the equity equation.



**AHA's Mission Statement:**  
**To be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.**

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Read the introduction to ETS.

Share why you joined the ETS movement.

Encourage anyone who has not joined ETS to go online after the program and sign up for this national movement.

Note that ETS is a platform of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association and works in partnership with community organizations across the country.

Highlight the American Heart Association's Mission Statement.

## POINT 1: Sodium and Your Health

### Sodium and Your Body

- Your body needs some sodium to work properly.
- Too much sodium causes your body to hold onto water. This puts an extra burden on your heart and blood vessels.
- Most of the sodium we consume is in the form of salt.



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Say:

“First, let’s talk about how sodium (salt) affects the body.”

Then read the slide.



## **POINT 1:** Sodium and Your Health

**Reducing the amount of sodium in your diet can help you lower or avoid high blood pressure.**

High blood pressure is a leading cause of heart disease and stroke.



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Read the slide.

## POINT 1: Sodium and Your Health

### Too much sodium also puts you at risk for:

- Enlarged heart muscle
- Headaches
- Kidney disease
- Osteoporosis
- Stroke
- Heart failure
- Kidney stones
- Stomach cancer



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Say:

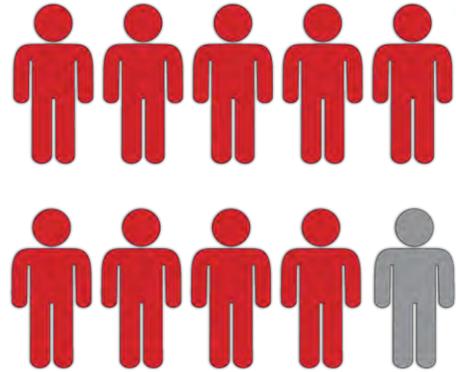
“In addition to high blood pressure, too much sodium may also put you at risk for:”

Then read the bullets on the slide.

## POINT 1: Sodium and Your Health

### Did You Know?

- **Nine out of 10 Americans** consume too much sodium.
- Sodium added to food outside the home accounts for **more than two-thirds of total sodium intake** in the U.S.
- **More than 70% of sodium** consumed is from processed, packaged and restaurant foods.



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Say:

"Here are some statistics about the amount of sodium we're consuming and where it comes from."

Then, ask someone to volunteer to read the bullets.

## POINT 1: Sodium and Your Health

### Diverse Groups at Risk

High blood pressure (HBP) among blacks is among the highest in the U.S. as well as worldwide.

In the U.S.:

- Over 57% of non-Hispanic blacks have HBP.
- Among Hispanics, 44% have HBP.
- Over 41% of Asian Americans have HBP.



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Say:

“Diverse communities are a greater risk for high blood pressure.”

Then read the slide.

Then ask the group:

“Does anyone in your family have high blood pressure? If so, raise your hand.”

Then say:

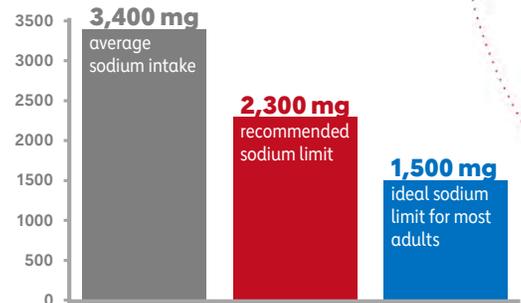
“By limiting your sodium intake, you can:

- Help reduce your risk of high blood pressure.
- And, if you have high blood pressure, limiting your sodium intake can help control your blood pressure.

## POINT 1: Sodium and Your Health

### How Much is Too Much?

- Most adults consume **more than 3,400 milligrams (mg)** of sodium a day.
- **The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 mg a day**, moving toward an ideal limit of no more than 1,500 mg per day for most adults.
- Even cutting back by 1,000 mg a day can improve blood pressure and heart health.



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Say:

"Most adults consume more than 3,400 mg of sodium each day.

The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 milligrams (mg) a day and moving toward an ideal limit of no more than 1,500 mg per day for most adults as an optimal goal. That level is associated with a significant reduction in blood pressure, which in turn reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Because the average American's sodium intake is so excessive, even cutting back by 1,000 mg a day can improve blood pressure and heart health."

Reference the "How Too Much Sodium Affects your Health" handout.

## POINT 2: Common Sources of Sodium

### What's the Difference Between Salt and Sodium?

#### SODIUM

- Sodium is a mineral that's essential for life.
- Sodium helps your body work.
- It helps to control your body's fluid balance.
- Sodium also helps send nerve impulses and affects muscle function.

#### SALT

- Table salt is about 40% sodium and 60% chloride.
- Salt and sodium are commonly used interchangeably.
- To find out the amount of "salt" in a food, check the "sodium" content on the label.

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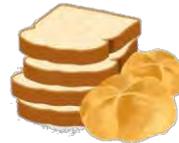
Read the slide.

## POINT 2: Common Sources of Sodium

### Did you know?

These six popular foods can add high levels of sodium to your diet.

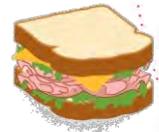
- Breads and rolls
- Pizza
- Sandwiches
- Cold cuts and cured meats
- Soup
- Burritos and tacos



BREADS & ROLLS



PIZZA



SANDWICHES



COLD CUTS & CURED MEATS



SOUP



BURRITOS & TACOS

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Say:

"We've just learned too much sodium can be risky for your health. It's important to take back control of the sodium in your food.

One of the first steps is learning about the Salty 6. These are six popular foods that can add high levels of sodium to your diet."

Ask someone to read the bullets.

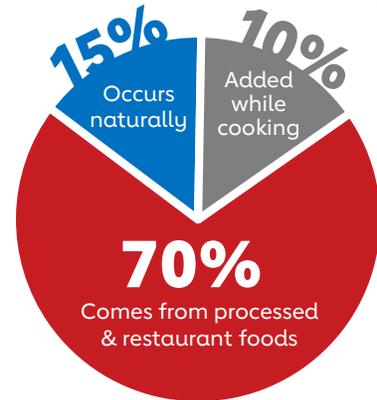
Then ask: Did any of the foods on the list surprise you? Some of them may have because they may not even taste salty.

Reference the "Salty 6 Infographic" handout.

## WHERE DOES THE SODIUM WE EAT COME FROM?

**Most of the sodium we eat comes from packaged, processed and restaurant foods.**

- **Processed foods** are packaged in boxes, cans, or bags.
- **Packaged foods** are ready to eat, convenience items such as prepared meals, gravy mixes, canned soups, and cake mixes.
- **Restaurants** often rely on some processed foods in their food prep.



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Say:

“Unfortunately, most of the sodium we eat is hidden. More than 70% of the sodium Americans eat comes from packaged, prepared and restaurant foods — not the saltshaker.

- Processed foods are packaged in boxes, cans, or bags. They often contain additives, artificial flavorings, and other preservatives.
- Packaged foods are ready-to-eat convenience items such as TV dinners, gravy mixes, canned soups, and cake mixes. Packaged foods are one type of processed food.
- Restaurant foods are those eaten at a commercial eatery. It may be a kiosk, fast food place, take-out/take-away joints, casual dining or white-table cloth establishment. Restaurants often rely on some processed foods in their food prep and typically use table salt for seasoning.”

Source of graphic to be designed to replace this one: <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/effects-of-excess-sodium-infographic>

And

[Citation: Harnack LI, Cogswell ME, Shikany JM, et al. Sources of sodium in U.S. adults from 3 geographic regions. Circulation. 2017;135:1775–1783.](https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_sodium.htm)

[https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/fs\\_sodium.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_sodium.htm)

## POINT 2: Common Sources of Sodium



### More than 70% of the sodium we eat comes from processed and restaurant foods.

- Packaged and prepared foods often have sodium added during the manufacturing process.
- Breads and cereals, cold cuts and cured meats, pizza, poultry, soup, and sandwiches contain sodium.



### Some foods contain sodium in their natural state.

- Cantaloupes, potatoes, and milk contain sodium in small amounts.
- Bok choy, beets, and chard have moderate amounts of sodium.



### We also add sodium during cooking and at the table.

- Sodium is in products such as baking soda and seasoning blends.
- It is also found in table salt.

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Say:

“This table describes the various ways that sodium makes its way to your plate.”

Review the information on the slide.

## SODIUM ON THE NUTRITION FACTS LABEL

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)</b>	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Take note of the serving size.

If your portion size equals two servings of a product, you're eating double the sodium listed.

Listed in milligrams ("mg").

Look for "soda" and "sodium" and the symbol "Na" in the ingredients list.

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Review the information on the slide.

Ask the group:

- How many of you read the food label before you buy a food?
  - Explain that the best way to learn about higher sodium foods is by comparing labels. Then choose the product with the lowest amount of sodium.
  - Review the information on the slide.

## HIDDEN SOURCES OF SODIUM

### Ingredients such as:

- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Sodium bicarbonate
- Sodium nitrate
- Sodium citrate
- Sodium glutamate
- Sodium lactate
- Sodium phosphate



**Baking soda and baking powder also contain sodium.**

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Say:

“Sodium comes in many forms. One of the more obvious ways you can find it is on the nutrition facts label as we just saw. And sometimes, it’s hidden in multiple words in the ingredients list that you may not recognize.

Here is an example of a few.”

Refer to the bulleted list.

Then say:

“Other little-known hiding places for sodium are over-the-counter and prescription drugs. Check out the labels and ingredient list on over-the-counter drugs. For prescription drugs, you’ll have to ask your doctor or pharmacist since it is not on the bottle.”

## POINT 3: Reducing Your Sodium Intake

### Read the Nutrition Facts Label

- When buying prepared and packaged foods, always check the sodium content on the Nutrition Facts label.
- Compare the sodium content of similar products.
- Choose the items with the lowest sodium.



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Say:

“When buying prepared and packaged foods, always check the sodium content on the Nutrition Facts label. Compare the sodium content of similar products. Then choose the product with the lowest sodium.”

## UNDERSTANDING FOOD PACKAGING

### Sodium-free

Less than 5 milligrams of sodium per serving and contains no sodium chloride

### Very low sodium

35 milligrams or less per serving

### Low sodium

140 milligrams or less per serving

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Say:

"Here are sodium-related terms you should look for on food packages and what they mean."

Read the category titles, but not the descriptions (unless time allows).

Then ask the group:

"What do you think the best choices would be?"

Then confirm (or say), the best choices are to buy sodium-free, very-low or low-sodium versions.

Source:

<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/how-much-sodium-should-i-eat-per-day>

## UNDERSTANDING FOOD PACKAGING

**Reduced (or less) sodium**

At least **25 percent less sodium** per serving than the usual sodium level

**Light (for sodium-reduced products)**

The food is “low calorie” and “low fat” and **sodium is reduced by at least 50 percent** per serving

**Light in sodium**

The **sodium is reduced by at least 50 percent** per serving

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Say:

“Here are sodium-related terms you should look for on food packages and what they mean.”

Read the category titles, but not the descriptions (unless time allows).

Then ask the group:

“What do you think the best choices would be?”

Then confirm (or say), the best choices are to buy sodium-free, very-low or low-sodium versions.

Source:

<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/how-much-sodium-should-i-eat-per-day>

## LOOK FOR THE HEART-CHECK MARK

One of four sodium limits applies depending on the food category:

- up to 140 mg per label serving
- 240 mg per label serving
- 360 mg per label serving
- 480 mg per label serving and per standard serving size

For more information and a list of certified foods, visit [heartcheck.org](http://heartcheck.org).



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Say:

"The Heart-Check mark is a simple tool to help you Eat Smart and watch for sodium. When you see it, you can be confident a product aligns with the American Heart Association's recommendations for an overall healthy eating pattern, including limiting sodium.

So, look for the AHA Heart-Check mark on the package (or menu).

For more information and a list of certified foods, visit [heartcheck.org](http://heartcheck.org)"

Reference the Heart-Check infographic.

## HEALTHY DIET TIPS

### Follow an overall heart-healthy diet that emphasizes:

- Variety of fruits and vegetables
- Whole-grains
- Low-fat dairy products
- Skinless poultry and fish
- Nuts and legumes
- Non-tropical vegetable oils
- Limiting saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, red meat, sweets and sugary drinks



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Review the information on the slide.

Recommended Dietary Pattern to Achieve Adherence to the American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology (AHA/ACC) Guidelines

<http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/134/22/e505>



## HEALTHY DIET TIPS

### When Cooking at Home

- **Resist temptation.**  
Use less salt when cooking and seasoning.
- **Try it first.**  
Don't salt your food before you taste it.
- **Be free.**  
Try salt-free seasoning alternatives.
- **Be adventurous.**  
Use herbs, spices, vinegars or fresh lime or lemon juice to add flavor instead of salt.



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Review the information on the slide.

## HEALTHY DIET TIPS

### When Eating Out

- **Search before you go.**  
Lots of restaurants and fast food chains have nutrition information on their websites.
- **Look for clues.**  
Look for “healthy” designations or symbols on the menu.
- **Have it your way.**  
Request that your dish be prepared without added salt or high-sodium ingredients.



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Review the information on the slide.

Then say:

“Be prepared when you go out to eat. Healthy choices can be found if you know what to look for and how to ask.”

Source: <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/dining-out-doesnt-mean-ditch-your-diet>

## CHECK YOUR MEDICINES

**If you have HBP, ask your health care provider or pharmacist about the sodium content of your medicines, including over-the-counter drugs.**

- Read the labels before buying over-the-counter drugs.
- Ask your pharmacist if there are low-sodium alternatives available to medicines you may be taking.



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Say:

“As mentioned earlier, our medications could be hidden sources of sodium. So, ”  
then read the bullets on the slide.



## YOUR VOICE MATTERS

**We all have the power to make a difference by speaking out for policies that help build healthier communities and healthier lives.**

Join **You're the Cure** today and be among the first to know when major policy initiatives pass or when your help is needed to advocate for a healthy future.



**Text EMPOWER to 46839 join today!**

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Say:

Thank you for joining today. Before we close this lesson, we would like to mention other ways you can continue your health journey and help others in your community.

Each of us have the power to make a difference in our community. By joining the American Heart Association's You're the Cure program, you can be among the first to know when major policy initiatives pass or when your help is needed to advocate for an issue. Text EMPOWER to 46839 to join today!

## USE YOUR VOICE TO CREATE HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

You can help us work to draw communities together on the path to building a sustainable culture of health.

Go to [EmPOWEREDtoServe.org](https://www.EmPOWEREDtoServe.org)

Sign up to become an ambassador and learn how you can be a part of the movement!

**Join us as we impact the health of ALL in our communities!**



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Encourage everyone to be active in the EmPOWERED to Serve movement.

Share how being part of the ETS movement helps you embrace a lifestyle of health.

Encourage everyone to come to a future ETS health lesson.

## WRAP-UP

**We appreciate your thoughts!**

Tell us what you liked best.

Email us at:  
[empoweredtoserve@heart.org](mailto:empoweredtoserve@heart.org)



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Thank everyone for coming.

Thank all the volunteers who helped coordinate the program.

Take a moment to share an inspirational reading or ask the group to join you in an uplifting song.

# WE ARE EMPOWERED TO SERVE

...serve our health, serve our community



**The American Heart Association requests that this document be cited as follows:**  
American Heart Association EmPOWERED to Serve Health Lessons. [EmPOWEREDtoServe.org](https://www.heart.org/empoweredtoserve)

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Put this slide up as your closing slide and leave it up until all the participants leave the room.