

Low Sodium Snack Ideas to Increase Calories

Too much sodium (salt) in your diet makes you hold on to too much fluid. This fluid can collect in your hands, legs, ankles, belly, and lungs. Sodium comes from the salt shaker, but also in many foods you might not realize – even when you don't add extra salt.

Gaining weight can be hard, especially when you are trying to watch your sodium. Snacking on the right foods throughout the day will help.

Low-Sodium Strategies

- Aim for a daily intake of 2000 milligrams (mg) *or less*.
- Keep in mind that one teaspoon of table salt contains 2,300 mg of sodium.
- Avoid adding table salt, sea salt, kosher salt, or seasoned salts to foods during cooking or at the table.
- Try using herbs and spices like garlic, onion, basil, thyme, and oregano instead of salt (avoid salt versions of these like garlic salt).
- Read labels for sodium content. Here are some tips:
 - Choose side dishes or snacks with 140 mg or less sodium per serving.
 - Each meal should have 600 mg sodium or less.

Tips for Increasing Calories

- Eat more often. Try to eat 4 to 6 small meals or snacks throughout your day.
- Try drinks like Ensure[®], Boost[®], Carnation Breakfast Essentials[®], or others.
- You can also make your own homemade milkshakes or fruit smoothies with whole milk, yogurt, ice cream, instant breakfast, no-salt-added peanut butter, fruit, and/or milk powder.
- If you don't feel like eating, a shake may be used in place of a meal or for a snack in between.
- Plan your meals around your energy level. For example, if you feel best in the morning, eat a big breakfast. Save shakes or other convenience foods for later in the day as you "run out of steam."

Really Tasty, Low Sodium Snack Ideas

| Recipe | Energy per serving (calories) | Sodium per serving (mg) |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Make your own trail mix: 1 cup unsalted popcorn, ¼ cup unsalted nuts, ¼ cup raisins, ¼ cup plain M&M's® | 450 | 50 |
| 1 slice of bread, 2 Tbsp low sodium or natural peanut butter, ½ banana | 300 | 200 |
| Homemade fruit smoothie: 1 cup frozen strawberries, 1 frozen banana, ½ cup orange juice, 1 cup whole milk yogurt | 330 | 140 |
| Peanut butter crackers: 6 unsalted or low sodium crackers, 2 Tbsp low sodium or natural peanut butter | 250 | 130 |
| 1 small bagel topped with 2 Tbsp cream cheese | 260 | 280 |
| 1 slice of bread, 1 Tbsp honey, 1 cup whole milk | 200 | 265 |
| 6 unsalted crackers, 3 oz. drained tuna (packed without salt), 1 Tbsp. Miracle Whip® Salad Dressing, 1 cup raw carrots | 200 | 300 |
| 1 small baked potato with 1 Tbsp sour cream and 1 Tbsp salsa | 150 | 150 |
| 1 pack Carnation Breakfast Essentials® made with whole milk | 280 | 200 |
| 1 cup pasta with 2 Tbsp olive oil, fresh herbs, and 1 oz. shredded mozzarella | 450 | 170 |
| 15 unsalted pretzels and ½ cup pudding (not instant) | 250 | 150 |
| 1 cup whole milk Greek yogurt, ¼ cup strawberries, and ¼ cup granola | 435 | 100 |
| 3 cups popcorn (about 2 Tbsp unpopped) made on stove with vegetable oil, 1 Tbsp unsalted butter, 2 Tbsp nutritional yeast for "cheesy" flavor | 245 | 3 |

How to Read a Label

You should get in the habit of checking food labels for the most up-to-date information. Sodium is always on the food label. These steps will help you figure out how many calories and how much sodium is in a certain food:

1. **Number of servings and mg of sodium** – The label gives you the serving size and the number of servings in the package. The Nutrition Facts apply to the serving size listed on the label, not necessarily to the whole package. Remember, if the serving size is 1 cup and you eat or drink 2 cups, you must multiply the amount of sodium by 2. (The same goes for the calories, etc.)
2. **Look at the ingredients** – Be aware of products that list “salt,” “sodium,” and “monosodium glutamate” as one of the first five ingredients.
3. **Compare brands** – The sodium content of a particular food may vary from brand to brand. Be sure you are comparing similar serving sizes. Remember, those foods labeled as *reduced sodium* contain at least 25% less sodium than the regular variety. For example, a reduced sodium frozen entrée may have 600 mg sodium instead of 800 mg sodium in the regular version.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Serving Size 2 crackers (14 g) | |
| Servings Per Container About 21 | |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories 60 Calories from Fat 15 | |
| <hr/> | |
| | % 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 | |
| <hr/> | |
| 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 |

What to Look for When Reading Food Labels

There are laws that regulate what certain words and phrases mean on the front of food labels. The table below explains what food companies are allowed to say. But remember, the serving you eat may not be the same as the suggested serving on the nutrition label.

| 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 |

Foods to Avoid

Some foods are very high in sodium. You should avoid these foods in your diet as much as possible. There are reduced sodium versions of some these products, but these may still be high in sodium-check the labels!

| | |
|---|--|
| Processed deli meats | Salt pork |
| Sausage | Fat back |
| Bacon | Regular salad dressings |
| Hot dogs | Salt |
| Canned meats | Bouillon |
| Smoked or cured meats (pepperoni, salami, etc.) | Seasoning salts |
| Breaded meats, fish, poultry | Soy sauce |
| Processed cheese products (Cheez Wiz®, Velveeta®, etc.) | Worcestershire sauce |
| Pickles | Regular canned soups |
| Canned vegetables and vegetable juices that are not "reduced sodium" or "no salt added" | Dry soup mixes |
| Olives | Frozen meals |
| Biscuits | Fast food |
| Salted snack foods (pretzels, etc.) | Canned tomato products, spaghetti sauce, tomato, or V-8® juice |
| Seasoned rice (Rice-A-Roni®, etc.) | Noodle or potato mixes |