

# **SALT.... IT'S EVERYWHERE,**

## **FINDING THE BALANCE BETWEEN TOO MUCH AND NOT ENOUGH**

### *It's All in the Numbers*



## **13 THINGS YOU PROBABLY NEVER KNEW ABOUT SALT**

*It's been valued as currency and decried as a health hazard,  
but there's so much more to salt than meets the eye.*

### **1. It used to be used as money**

Salt was so valuable in ancient Rome that soldiers were sometimes paid with it. In fact, the word “salary” comes from the Latin word *sal*, for salt. When a soldier was doing a lousy job, his paycheck might be cut, which is how we got the expression “not worth his salt.”

### **2. Salt can still be valuable today**

Amethyst Bamboo 9x salt, which rings up at \$398 a pound, may be the most expensive in the world. This pricey stuff takes a lot of time to produce—it's roasted nine times inside a bamboo pole at temperatures exceeding 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit. One store says the resulting delicacy “smells like something dragons use to season their victims before eating them.”

### **3. It was a big import**

Historically, salt's value came from its ability to preserve food. Venice, Italy may be famous for its canals now, but salt imports fueled its rise as an influential trade power by the end of the 13th century.

### **4. Salt also took on a great deal of symbolic value**

There's a reason it is mentioned so many times in the Bible (“salt of the earth,” “a pillar of salt,” “a covenant of salt”). Its preservative properties made it an apt metaphor for permanence and conviction.

### **5. Cutting it out isn't easy**

Most people know about the health risks associated with sodium, but reducing your

intake isn't always easy. Here are some facts about salt to put things in perspective. More than 75 percent of the sodium Americans eat comes from processed foods; bread, cured meats, and canned soup top the list. Even foods that don't taste salty may contain it. Instant oatmeal with maple and brown sugar, for instance, contains 170 milligrams of sodium per ounce—a little more than a small bag of potato chips

### **6. Even French fries aren't necessarily the biggest culprit**

How's this for unexpected facts about salt? A 2012 study that examined sodium levels of fast-food menu items from different countries found that pizza and burgers contained more sodium than French fries, because they come in larger serving sizes.

### **7. Extra salt might be lurking in your meat, even if you cook at home and are very careful**

According to the USDA, about 60 percent of all raw meat and poultry products are injected with or soaked in a salty solution. The words “enhanced,” “marinated,” “basted,” or “improved” on the packaging can signal the presence of salt. To avoid it, opt for label wording such as “contains up to 4 percent retained water,”

### **8. Sea salt isn't healthier**

Sea salt may sound healthier than table salt, but most sea salts contain roughly the same proportion of sodium—about 40 percent—as table salt. If you are looking for sodium-free flavoring, try garlic, pepper, oregano, sage, rosemary, and other spices or herbs.

### **9. Always try to reduce your intake**

Even if you don't have hypertension, it's still a good idea to cut down on your salt intake to reduce your blood pressure, according to a 2017 review of 185 studies.

### **10. It can cause headaches**

For older folks especially, a heavy hand with the salt shaker may also hurt your head. A study of 975 people ages 60 to 80 with hypertension found that reducing sodium in their diets was associated with lower risk of headache.

### **11. Still, we all need at least some salt**

It facilitates the transport of nutrients and oxygen, allows nerves to transmit messages, and helps our muscles work. The average adult's body contains about 250 grams of sodium—the equivalent of about three or four shakers of salt.

### **12. It treated goiter**

In the 1920s, salt became a primary tool in the fight against goiter, a thyroid disorder caused by iodine deficiency. Iodized salt became common in American kitchens, and cases of goiter nearly disappeared. Today, only about 53 percent of table salt sold through retail is iodized.

### **13. It's used mostly on roads**

After all those facts about salt in food, you might be surprised to know that the number one use of salt in the United States isn't on food at all. In 2016, about 44 percent of salt went toward de-icing roads, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Only 3 percent was used in agricultural and food processing.

## **24 WAYS SALT IS MAKING YOU SICK**

*You're probably eating way too much salt, and your body isn't happy about it. Here's what you need to know to be more aware of your sodium consumption—and reduce it.*

### **1. Salt wreaks havoc on your blood pressure**

If you're the type to regularly tuck into a bag of chips, it's worth reconsidering the habit. Too much sodium isn't good for anyone, but for people who have hypertension, salt—a sodium compound—is especially dangerous. Sodium leads to small spikes in blood pressure for people who don't already have hypertension and large spikes in people who do, according to a 2017 review of 185 studies from Europe, Canada, and the United States.

Hypertension is the key driver of a number of cardiovascular problems, including heart attacks, strokes, and coronary artery disease.

### **2. Many restaurant meals contain the amount of salt you should have in an entire day ...**

A 2013 survey published in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health* examined 20 sit-down and 65 fast-food restaurants across Canada and found that the average dish contained 1,455 milligrams of sodium.

### **3. ... and a fancy sit-down meal may be even worse than a fast-food one**

The same study found that 40 percent of menu items at sit-down restaurants packed at least 1,500 milligrams of sodium (versus 18 percent of fast-food menu items). The saltiest meal options? Wraps, sandwiches, ribs, and pastas that contained meat or seafood.

### **4. All you need is 1,300 milligrams**

Sodium is essential for contracting and relaxing muscles, transmitting nerve signals, and maintaining adequate fluid levels, but we don't need much of it for these important functions. Recommended sodium intake for people ages 51 to 70 is 1,300 milligrams a day and 1,000 milligrams per day for those over 70. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), Americans eat an average of 3,400 milligrams of sodium a day—way above the AHA's ideal daily limit of 1,500 milligrams.

## 5. Cutting back may be even more important for certain groups of people

The studies in the 2017 review mostly relied on white participants; the authors noted that the few studies with Asian and African American participants suggest that a reduction in salt consumption has an even more significant blood-pressure-lowering effect in these populations. This is believed to be due to genetic differences in how the body processes salt

## 6. There's no way to tell how much salt is in your dish

In 2016, Ontario became the first province in Canada to require chain restaurants to list calories on their menus. Those pushing for the move asked that sodium be labeled, but the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—the government agency responsible for managing the health-care system and services—decided against it. (Critics claimed that the decision was a concession to the restaurant industry.) So far, the only jurisdictions in North America that have passed laws requiring that sodium levels be stated on menus are Philadelphia and New York City, where meals that contain a day's worth or more of sodium are marked.

## 7. "Healthy" options can be just as dangerous

Even seemingly nutritious foods can pack a salty punch. Half a cup of canned tomatoes can have 400 milligrams of salt. A cup of bran cereal can have about 240 milligrams of sodium. And just three ounces (85 grams) of smoked salmon can



have more than 660 milligrams. To reduce sodium, try to eat foods in their freshest form possible, and be sure to check the sodium levels noted on the label

## 8. It may lead to weight gain

In 2015, scientists at Queen Mary University of London found evidence suggesting a link between sodium and obesity. By measuring sodium levels in more than 1,200 study participants' urine and recording their food intake over a four-day period, researchers found that those with high salt levels

were more likely to be overweight, even if they weren't eating more calories than the low-salt group.

## 9. Salt increases your risk of kidney stones

It's not clear why, but sodium likes to grab on to calcium before it's flushed out of the body through urine. The extra urinary calcium can form into crystals and eventually lead to kidney stones. According to a 2012 study published in the *Journal of Urology*, women whose diets were high in sodium were between 11 and 61 percent more likely to develop the painful condition. Another small study found that a low-salt diet reduced urinary calcium in both men and women who were prone to kidney stones.

## 10. Salt can hurt your sleep ...

If you find yourself making frequent nighttime bathroom trips, salt could be the culprit. A 2017 European study found that men over 60 who reduced their salt intake by 25 percent decreased the number of times they got up to urinate in the night, from 2.3 to 1.4 times, on average.

## 11. ... and increase your risk of heart failure

A 2017 Finnish study that followed more than 4,600 people for more than 12 years found that those who had the highest salt levels in their urine at the start were more than twice as likely to suffer heart failure as those who had the lowest levels. The increased risk was found even in salt lovers who didn't have high blood pressure.

## 12. You likely don't even know you're eating it

Often, we don't taste the sodium because it's so diffuse in the food. For example, a single croissant has 424 milligrams, while eggs Benedict can pack a whopping 2,015 milligrams of sodium. Why is salt there in the first place? For starters, it's a preservative. Also, it acts as a fermenting agent in breads and causes food to retain water; for products sold by weight, more liquid means more profit.



### 13. Kids are overloading

According to Health Canada, the government department overseeing the country's public health, 77 percent of children ages one to three and 93 percent of kids age's four to eight are exceeding the recommended daily sodium intake.

### 14. A potassium deficit could worsen sodium's effects

Like sodium, potassium is an important mineral in the body. While excess sodium increases blood pressure, potassium eases tension in blood-vessel walls and helps keep blood pressure in check. The mineral also aids in sodium excretion so that excess salt doesn't stick around and cause. Blood tests ordered by your doctor can confirm whether you're low in potassium, but so long as you're eating your fruits and vegetables, you shouldn't have to worry. High sources of potassium include white beans, spinach, bananas, avocados, sweet potatoes, and yogurt.

### 15. You're falling for fake news

Both the food industry and the salt industry fund research on dietary sodium. Their interests will often fund the low-quality evidence. And even when they haven't funded it, they will market the low-quality evidence, increasing its visibility.

### 16. Salt hides away in processed foods ...



77 percent of our sodium intake comes from processed and fast foods. Here are some of the biggest offenders:

- Meat pizza: A heavy takeout pizza has 693 milligrams per slice (that's more than 2,000 milligrams in three slices!)
- Chicken noodle soup: 1,613 milligrams per can
- Creamy cucumber salad dressing: 131 milligrams per tablespoon
- Processed salami: 1,264 milligrams per 100-gram serving (about 3.5 ounces)
- Store-bought bakery bread: 240 milligrams of sodium per 50-gram serving

### 17. It might be hiding in your meat

Salt water is injected into some fresh and frozen meat to make it juicy and larger in volume. How can you make sure your choice cut hasn't been sodium-boosted? Look for packages with no nutrition label—only meat that hasn't been treated with salt can legally be sold without one in Canada. In the United States, the USDA requires that labels indicate if salt solutions have been added to raw meat.

### 18. Reduced intake will save lives

If people were able to reduce their salt intake as recommended, it would substantially reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease and mortality.

### 19. If you happen to be "salt-sensitive," sodium is especially harmful

Some people's bodies are less efficient at flushing out excess salt, and it's estimated that more than a third of us are affected by the mineral in this way. If you get bloated after salty meals, it's a sign of salt sensitivity. If hypertension runs in your family, you're also more likely to be salt-sensitive.

### 20. Sodium is particularly damaging if you are over 50, are overweight, or have diabetes

Studies show that sodium causes blood pressure to increase more later in life. As we get older, we become more sensitive to salt. The aging body simply isn't as efficient at flushing out sodium. Blood-pressure spikes after eating sodium-rich meals are also dramatic in people who are overweight and people who have diabetes, though scientists aren't clear on why.



### 21. Sea salts and rock salts aren't better than table salt

The fancier products have trace amounts of minerals, like iron and potassium, which are destroyed in the processing of table salt. But the nutritional value of sea and rock salts is so insignificant that switching to more expensive seasonings won't positively affect your health. All salts contain the same amount of sodium by weight.

## 22. It can raise your risk of stomach cancer

The World Cancer Research Fund has estimated that 14 percent of stomach-cancer cases could be avoided in the United Kingdom each year if people kept salt intake to less than 2,400 milligrams per day.

## 23. You're probably hooked on salt

When our diets are high in sodium, we find low-sodium foods bland. The good news? It only takes about six weeks for our taste buds to adapt to lower-salt foods. Stick with a lower-sodium diet, and soon you won't miss the salt.

## 24. "Reduced sodium" doesn't mean healthy

If the original product is way too high in sodium, a 25 percent reduction could still leave you with a product that's too salty. To be sure a food is actually low in sodium, read the nutrition label. Avoid products that contain 20 percent or more per serving of the U.S. Daily Value of sodium, which is 2,300 milligrams. You can also look for the "low sodium" label. Unlike products that advertise reduced sodium, products that use this wording must have 140 milligrams or less per serving. Next, learn the **signs that you're eating too much salt**.

# 7 CLEAR SIGNS YOU'RE EATING TOO MUCH SALT

*Too much sodium can wreak havoc on your body. Here are signs you need to cut back.*

### 1. Your brain feels foggy

Who knew that salt could even impact your brain function? According to a 2011 Canadian study on 1,200 more sedentary adults, those with high-sodium diets had a higher chance of cognitive decline than those with less salt in their diets. As you age it is important to keep track of how much salt you consume, and make changes if necessary.

### 2. Your thirst is raging

Foods with high amount of sodium (think: chips, spaghetti sauce, and pepperoni pizza) make you feel thirstier, because sodium messes with the balance of fluid in your body. If you had a day of eating more high-sodium food, like at a baseball game, try to drink a lot of water. Your body is probably craving water, so it can restore the salt balance in your cells.

### 3. Your body is swelling in strange places

Yes, just one night of too much sodium can actually make you look and feel more bloated in the morning. This is called edema, the swelling of extra fluid in your body's tissues. Edema can be a symptom of an underlying disease, but it can also be a sign of too much sodium in your diet. The simple solution is to cut back on sodium. Read food labels, look for low-sodium options, or cook your own food to control the salt.

### 4. You get kidney stones

A diet high in too much sodium can actually hinder kidney function. Too much salt can increase the amount of protein found in your urine. More protein in your urine is a "major risk factor" for kidney disease. Additionally, high-sodium diets can also increase the risk of kidney stones. If you have excessive kidney stones or pain, you should see a doctor and work with a nutritionist to change to a low sodium diet

### 5. You have stomach ulcers

Too much sodium has been linked to stomach ulcers and cancer in animals, according to a study published in the journal *Infection and Immunity*. Although more research is needed, the findings suggest that people should be wary of salt damaging their stomach lining.

### 6. You have high blood pressure

Americans consume almost 3,400 milligrams of sodium a day. According to the American Heart Association, you should be eating only 1,500 milligrams of sodium. This extra sodium can increase blood pressure by holding more fluid in the body, making your heart pump harder. Ask your doctor if following a low sodium diet could lower your blood pressure.

### 7. You use table salt (like, ever)

While it is good to control your own salt intake, it is easy to overdo the salt shaker. A half a teaspoon of table salt contains 1,150 milligrams of sodium. If you shake some salt on your pasta three times

during a meal, the milligrams of sodium can quickly add up. Bottom line: Minimize your use of the salt shaker, especially if you eat a lot of convenience foods (which tend to be rich in sodium).

## 13 FOODS WITH WAY MORE SALT THAN YOU REALIZED

*What do instant oatmeal, cookies, and canned veggies have in common? They are all foods high in sodium—and you probably didn't know they were.*

### Cottage cheese

Cottage cheese with fruit is an old lunchtime favorite, packed with protein and calcium. But if you're aiming to lower your sodium, you might want to skip these creamy curds, as they're actually foods high in sodium. Cottage cheese has at least 400 mg of sodium per half cup. For a tasty substitute, try Greek yogurt. You'll get more protein, calcium, vitamin D, and as a bonus, some good-for-your-gut probiotics. Most Greek yogurts weigh in at only 70 mg of sodium per half cup. Greek yogurt can be part of one these **healthy high-protein breakfasts** you'll want to start eating.



### Veggie burgers

A vegetarian or vegan diet is known for being exceptionally healthy, so you may be shocked to learn that a veggie burger could be a high-sodium food. Many meat substitutes are as high, or higher in salt than the regular stuff, to improve the flavor and texture.

### Cookies

When satisfying a sweet tooth, you're probably more worried about sugar than salt. But just because a product is sweet doesn't mean it's not high in sodium. Besides the packaged baked goods we may toss in our shopping cart, watch for sneaky high-sodium sources, such as "healthy" versions of cookies and brownies.

### Instant oatmeal

Instant oatmeal is a popular option for the morning rush, especially in winter. Just add hot water and you have a warm and nutritious bowl of goodness, right? Not necessarily! Take charge of your sodium intake and spend an extra couple of minutes each morning with a serving of old-fashioned oats rather than relying on instant oatmeal. Instant oatmeal packs in as much as 200 mg per serving compared to zero sodium in plain oats. If plain oatmeal sounds blah, try topping it with berries, Greek yogurt, and cinnamon.

### Sports drinks

Even after a heavy-duty sweat session at the gym, you probably don't need a sports drink to replace your sodium stores. Those beverages are created for athletes training at a high level for an extended period. Water, coconut water, or maple water will quench your thirst and keep you within your daily sodium budget

### Canned veggies

When canned goods are on sale at your supermarket, it's tempting to stock up on canned veggies and beans, but that may not be the best strategy—they're actually foods high in sodium. Buying these items fresh or frozen without added salt is a better option. But if you want to stick to cans, look for 'no salt added' or 'reduced-sodium' varieties. If full-salt is your only option, drain and rinse the veggies or beans thoroughly with cold water before eating or cooking them. With a can of Blue Lake Whole Green Beans, for example, draining and rinsing will save you 200 mg of sodium.

**Cheese** We cube it, slice it, shred it, melt it, and sprinkle it on a variety of foods...because what's not to love about cheese? But alas, salt is a basic ingredient in cheese. It keeps bacteria in check,

controls moisture, acts as a preservative, and improves texture and taste. Some varieties are saltier than others. For example, a one-ounce serving of feta has 312 mg of sodium, whereas blue cheese has 391 mg per ounce, and pasteurized processed cheese has a whopping 428 mg per ounce. You can certainly opt for lower-sodium cheese or look for soft cheeses, which generally have lower sodium than hard cheeses. When you cook with cheese, spare the salt shaker, because cheese is a salty enough ingredient on its own.

### **Deli meat**

Deli meat may be a staple in the American sandwich, but it's a veritable salt bomb. Despite being a convenient source of protein, deli meat can rack up to 700 mg of sodium per serving. Seek out lower-salt alternatives or use leftover roasted chicken, canned tuna, or boiled eggs for your sandwich. You could also use less meat and make up the difference in veggies for a fiber-filling lunch that will see you through till dinner.

### **Cereal**

Most fans of breakfast cereal know to be concerned about sugar content, especially if you have kids. Little do we realize how much salt is lurking in seemingly healthy cereal options. We're often misled by terms like "natural," "whole grains," or "fiber-rich," so we neglect to check the label for sodium. But Post Grape-Nuts, for example, has 270 mg sodium per half cup. A cup of General Mills Cinnamon Toast Crunch has 240 mg of sodium per cup. The numbers seems small in relation to our 1,500 mg daily suggested maximum, but most of us double or triple the serving size listed on the box, so we're likely to eat a third of our daily sodium allowance by 9 a.m.

### **Pasta sauce**

Typical pasta sauce ingredients—tomatoes, onions, peppers, garlic, and spices—seem pretty healthy, but most store-bought varieties can put a big dent in your sodium budget. Ragu Original, for example, has 470 mg per half cup. By the time you add another heaping scoop as a dip for your salty breadstick, you're easily scarfing a high-sodium

feast. Look for lower sodium varieties such as Trader Joe's Organic Marinara Sauce, with just 25 mg of sodium in a half cup. You can always sprinkle in some Italian seasoning mix and you won't miss the salt.

### **Bread**

Yeast, flour, sugar, oil, and a bit of salt is what your grandmother's homemade bread calls for, but when you go store-bought, you can double, triple, or even quadruple the salt. Some breads have upwards of 325 mg of sodium per slice. Even if the numbers are lower on the nutrition label, be mindful of the serving size. Most folks eat two slices of bread at a time, but manufacturers often list the serving size as one slice.

### **Salad dressing**

Sugar and fat often get the blame for salad dressing's bad reputation while salt sneaks by, but many



dressings definitely qualify as foods high in sodium. Some salad dressings have more than 200 mg of sodium per serving, which is usually just two tablespoons. Beware of "low-fat" and "light" varieties, as they usually have extra sodium to compensate for the lower fat content. Since sodium is used to preserve the salad dressings we buy at the store, you can make your own lower salt version at home: mix a tablespoon each of olive oil, vinegar, or citrus juice; add your favorite fresh or dried herbs and finely chopped garlic or shallots.

### **Cocktail mixes**

Getting toasted shouldn't be your only concern when whipping up a pitcher of Bloody Mary drinks for your next brunch. One Bloody Mary cocktail has 650 mg of sodium. You can make your own lower-sodium cocktails at home.

## 9 BEST DIET SNACKS FOR WHEN YOU'RE TRYING TO CUT BACK ON SODIUM

*Chances are you're eating way too much salt, and most of it is coming from packaged foods – not the shaker on your dining table. So trade your chips and pretzels for healthy, filling snacks that won't blow your sodium budget.*

### Apples with peanut butter

Apples with peanut butter can be great low-salt diet snacks, but you have to make sure of one thing—that the only ingredient in the PB is plain ground organic peanuts, no salt added. One tablespoon of peanut butter has only 3 mg of sodium, while one medium apple has just 2 mg. The apple provides you with fiber and water for hydration, and the peanut butter provides you with protein for satiety.



### Unsalted nuts

Nuts are a powerful disease fighter that you probably already have in your pantry.

One cup of dry roasted almonds without added salt has only 1 mg of sodium, making almonds great diet snacks. Nuts and seeds are a heart-healthy snack when eaten in moderation, providing your body with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Choose the unsalted variety and eat them alone or mixed into yogurt for a crunchy taste.

### Air-popped popcorn

Popcorn makes an excellent whole grain snack, as long as you're avoiding the butter-and-salt-filled kind. Most of us have enjoyed the buttery goodness of microwave popcorn by simply unfolding a bag and pressing the "popcorn" button. Unfortunately, that buttery goodness can be a chemcialized butter flavor with additives and ingredients that less healthy than popping corn the old-fashioned way. Microwave bags aren't much better either. When bags of microwave popcorn are heated, they emit fine and ultrafine particles that may come with health risks. Exposure to high levels of the chemicals found in the bags has been linked to lung disease among those who work in popcorn manufacturing. Opt for air-popped

popcorn or make homemade popcorn instead. ([Here's how on next page](#)) At only 1 mg of sodium per cup, you can munch on this low-salt snack without any guilt. This kind of popcorn is low in calories—only 31 calories a cup—and doesn't contain any bad oils that can increase fat consumption. Instead of salt, try adding herbs or nutritional yeast, which has a buttery flavor but is actually dairy-free.

### Edamame

Edamame alone without all that added salt only contains 9 mg of sodium per cup. Soybeans are a great source of protein, as well as a bit of calcium, iron, and vitamin C. Edamame are also a top-ranked source of plant protein for people who don't eat meat, making them top-notch diet snacks.



### Raw veggies and Greek-yogurt dip



Carrots and celery sticks are much more enjoyable when you can dunk them in a savory dip, but many are high in salt that quickly make the snack unhealthy. Swap ranch dressing or other high-sodium dips for a Greek-yogurt based dip to get the same filling taste, but less salt. One medium carrot has 42 mg of sodium, and depending on the brand, many Greek yogurt-based dips can range from 25 to 100 mg of sodium per serving. If you're not into veggies, eat your Greek yogurt with a side of berries. One serving of Greek yogurt contains only 50 to 70 mg of sodium, while a whopping one cup of berries contains just 1 mg. Get the antioxidant boost of berries and the protein from the yogurt to keep you full and satisfied until your next meal.

### Whole fruit

Fruit is naturally low in sodium, so pick whatever type your taste buds desire. A variety of fruits contain just 1 mg of sodium, including strawberries and bananas. Many are also high in potassium, which could help fight high blood



pressure, a common symptom of a high-sodium diet.



### Roasted chickpeas

Roast chickpeas on a cookie sheet are a protein-rich snack. Add avocado oil or coconut oil and toss with spices like curry, paprika, and cumin for flavor and an antioxidant boost. Chickpeas are great low-salt diet snacks, as they only contain 24 mg of sodium per half cup. Just be sure to rinse canned chickpeas before roasting, as the liquid they come packed in is filled with sodium. These beans are also a great source of fiber to help promote good digestion.

### Kale chips

Steer clear of store-bought versions, which can be teaming with salt, and bake



your own addictive kale chips. Take a bag of raw kale, arrange it in one layer on a cookie sheet, give it a light coating of vegetable spray, and add the herbs and spices of your choice before baking or roasting at about 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Kale is a naturally low-salt superfood, with 25 mg of sodium per cup, and generous doses of beta-carotene, vitamins C and K, and calcium, among other key nutrients.

### Smoothies

Mixing whole fruits and vegetables is a great way to keep your salt content down. When tossing ingredients in a blender, include foods like leafy greens, peanut butter, strawberries, banana, and avocado, and you'll be keeping your sodium intake below 20 mg, all while getting in your protein, potassium, and healthy fats.



## AMAZING DIY MICROWAVE POPCORN

*Microwave popcorn couldn't be easier (and healthier) when you use this method. Makes 1 serving*

Ingredients: 1/4 cup popcorn kernels  
1/4 teaspoon oil  
Pinch of salt

### Directions:

Toss the popcorn kernels in a small bowl with the oil and a pinch of salt. Pour the contents into a brown paper lunch bag. Fold the bag over a couple of times and then fold the corners in so that the bag doesn't open during cooking.

Place the bag upright in the microwave and set the "cook" button for about 2 minutes. Turn off the microwave when the popping slows down to about two kernels between pops – otherwise, you risk scorching it.

Take the bag out of the microwave and open it carefully, watching out for hot steam. Pour the popcorn into a bowl and toss with seasonings of your choice. The heat will maximize the absorption of the seasoning's flavor.

### Personalize Your Popcorn

The beauty of this recipe is it's so versatile. The basic recipe is tasty on its own but you can add any flavor combo that suits your taste buds. What's also fun about this recipe is that it makes an individual portion so everyone can make their own bag, the way they like it! Set out melted butter, olive oil or toasted sesame oil, spices, cheeses and dried fruit and have everyone sprinkle on their own combos.

Here's some ideas:

#### Savory Combos

Italian seasoning and Parmesan cheese  
Rosemary and Parmesan  
Crumbled seaweed crisps  
Nutritional yeast (non-dairy, cheesy option) with cumin  
Wassabi, low-salt soy sauce and sesame oil  
Paprika, cumin and cayenne pepper

#### Sweet Combos

Cinnamon sugar  
Melted peanut butter and mini-chocolate chips  
Cocoa powder and coconut flakes  
Dried fruit and mini-dark chocolate chips