UNC PHYSICIANS NETWORK
UNC HEALTH CARE
CAROLINA ADVANCED HEALTH

Living with Heart Failure

LOW SODIUM (SALT) DIET

- Salt is the main source of sodium in food.
- Limiting the amount of sodium that you eat & drink helps to prevent the buildup of fluid in your body.

Sodium Recommendations

- Limit yourself to 2,000 mg or less of sodium each day. This is less than 1 teaspoon of salt.
- Put away the salt shaker!
  - Not adding salt to your food is the first step to achieving a low-sodium diet.
- Use as little salt as possible when cooking.
  - Add flavor with spices, garlic, onions, peppers, or lemon instead.
  - Avoid pre-made seasonings or sauces containing salt/sodium.
- Choose low-sodium alternatives when possible.
  - Fresh foods are generally the best choice.
    - Substitute frozen fruits & vegetables if fresh produce is too expensive.
  - Avoid canned foods when possible.
    - Select "no salt added" or "low-sodium" canned foods when available.
    - Rinse canned foods to remove extra salt.
  - Buy foods without added sauces, gravies, or seasonings.
  - Enjoy snack foods that have no added salt (nuts, seeds, pretzels, etc).
- Prepare foods at home so you can control the amount of salt used.
  - Restaurant and take-out foods are usually very high in sodium.
- When dining out:
  - When possible, choose restaurants that use fresh fruits and vegetables and offer low-sodium options.
  - Request that your food be prepared without salt.
  - Ask for dressings and sauces on the side.

High-Sodium Foods to Avoid

- Canned or preserved foods (soups/stews, vegetables, sauces, pickles, olives, etc.)
- Pre-packaged salty snacks (pretzels, chips, popcorn, nuts, etc.)
- Cured, smoked or processed meats (lunch meat, ham, bacon, hot dogs, sausage, jerky, etc.)
- Frozen dinners
- Instant or prepared mixes (pancake/muffin mix, instant hot cereal, boxed pasta/potatoes, etc.)
- Condiments (ketchup, mayonnaise, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, tartar sauce, etc.)
- Vegetable/tomato juice, sports drinks, instant drink mixes (cocoa, cappuccino, etc.)

Sodium Labels – What Do They Mean?

"Sodium free"	A tiny amount of sodium in each serving
"Very low sodium"	35 mg or less in each serving
"Low sodium"	140 mg or less in each serving
"Reduced sodium"	Usual level of sodium has been reduced by 25%
"Light or lite in sodium"	Usual level of sodium has been reduced by 50%