

# Keeping Sodium in Check in a Traditional Asian Diet



## How Much Sodium is Too Much?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends consuming less than 2300 mg sodium per day, which is about the amount of sodium in one teaspoon of salt.

## Sodium in Asian Cuisine

In Asian cuisine, which often relies on fish sauce and soy sauce as flavor enhancers, the sodium can add up quickly. A typical Asian diet can contain greater than 4600 mg of sodium in one day's worth of food!<sup>1</sup>

INGREDIENT	SODIUM IN 1 TEASPOON	SODIUM IN 1 TABLESPOON
Table salt	2300 mg	6980 mg
Fish sauce	470 mg	1410 mg
Soy sauce	290 mg	880 mg
Miso	210 mg	630mg
Low sodium Soy sauce	160 mg	510 mg

## 4 TIPS FOR KEEPING SODIUM IN CHECK

- 1 Use fresh herbs and aromatics to add flavor.** Ginger, garlic, lemongrass, turmeric, cilantro, basil, and lime juice are all delicious staples of the traditional Asian diet. These ingredients pack a flavor punch and help contribute to the irresistible aroma that Asian cuisine is known for.
- 2 Turn up the umami.** Best described as “savory” or “meaty,” umami is often known as the “fifth taste” (after sweet, bitter, sour, and salty). Mushrooms, ripe tomatoes, anchovies and seaweed are all full of umami, and are a great way to get that savory flavor without leaning too heavily on the salt shaker.
- 3 Add sodium-heavy sauces after cooking.** The test cooks at America’s Test Kitchen have found that “if you add salt only at the end, it provides a more concentrated, superficial coating that immediately hits your tongue.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, you can get away with using less.
- 4 Balance your plate with whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.** High sodium diets are troubling because they can put people at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and other health problems. On the other hand, research shows that eating a diet filled with whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and unsaturated fats may help reduce these risks, and offer numerous other health benefits to boot.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Asian Diets: Health Benefits and Risks.” Asian Diabetes Prevention Initiative. Accessed April 27, 2018. <http://asiandiabetesprevention.org/how-to-reduce-your-risk/asian-diets-benefits-risks>

<sup>2</sup> “Science: When Should You Add Salt During Cooking?” Cook’s Illustrated. Published March 2015. Accessed April 27, 2018. [https://www.cooksillustrated.com/how\\_tos/9161-science-when-should-you-add-salt-during-cooking](https://www.cooksillustrated.com/how_tos/9161-science-when-should-you-add-salt-during-cooking)

<sup>3</sup> “2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published December 2015. <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>

