

Can Processed Food Be Healthy?



There are a lot of conflicting messages about what processed food is.

Most of the food we eat today has been processed in some way, from salad mix to frozen dinners. Some processed foods have ingredients added, some are fortified to add nutrients, some are prepared for convenience, and some are packaged to last longer or for food safety. Even foods labeled “natural” or “organic” can be processed.

More people are paying attention to processed food.

74% of consumers prefer less sodium in processed foods.

Almost **50%** of consumers have tried to eat fewer processed foods.



What do you need to know?



Minimally processed foods have been manipulated (cut, cooked, packaged) in some way.



Some foods are processed with ingredients typically used in cooking, such as salt or sugar.



Highly processed foods are manufactured with ingredients that are not typically used in cooking.

1 Choose healthier processed foods.

By one recent estimate **highly processed foods** contribute

50% of the calories & **90%** of added sugars in the American diet

It's important to:

- Read food labels.
- Look for the **Heart-Check mark** on packaged foods.
- Make healthier choices when eating out.



2 Seek healthier alternatives to highly processed foods.



Cook more meals at home.



Swap highly processed foods with less processed options.



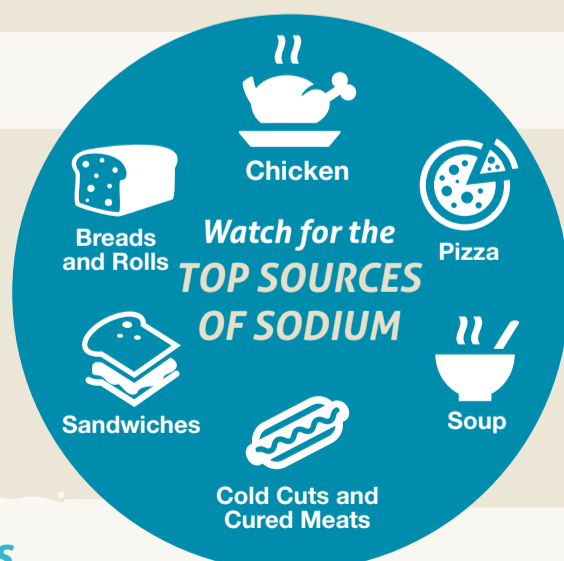
Try fruits and vegetables from the produce aisle, the farmer's market, or your own garden.

3 Watch out for sneaky sodium.

Extensive research has shown that too much sodium is related to high blood pressure, a primary risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Shake your sodium habit.

Most of the sodium we eat comes from **PROCESSED, PREPACKAGED, AND RESTAURANT FOODS, NOT THE SALT SHAKER.**



4 Take your food into your own hands.



American Heart Association advocates have written **more than 29,000 letters to the food companies and restaurants** that provide processed foods, asking that healthier options be made available.

You can too! Join our growing community, take action, get helpful tips and #BreakUpWithSalt today by visiting heart.org/sodium.