Given the overwhelming evidence that high sodium intake is linked to high blood pressure, many authorities are redoubling their efforts to reduce America’s daily sodium intake, which currently averages 4,300 milligrams for men and 2,900 milligrams for women. In fact, the new Dietary Guidelines, issued in January 2005, decreased the recommended intake for children and adults younger than middle-aged to 2,300 milligrams (a slight drop). More importantly, for the first time, the responsible agencies issued a specific, lower recommendation of no more than 1,500 milligrams of sodium for those with high blood pressure (hypertension), African-Americans, and adults who are middle-aged or older. African-Americans and middle-aged and older Americans may be more salt-sensitive and at higher risk for high blood pressure.

Vegetarians may be lured by the convenience of packaged and processed foods and may find it challenging to embark on a low-sodium eating plan. Thus, we have designed a low-sodium menu for vegetarians with an average sodium content of 1,500 milligrams or less. Be advised that this menu plan is a guide to low-sodium eating and is intended to provide an idea of what a low-sodium diet can look like. It may not meet the nutritional needs of every reader. Adjustments for your tastes and preferences, as well as additions of condiments, beverages, etc., may change the sodium content listed.

If you are not vegan and wish to become one, this meal plan may support such a change. You can read the vegan nutrition section on The VRG website, <www.vrg.org>, and consult a registered dietitian or other qualified nutrition professional, if necessary.

Since food labels can change, label reading is still necessary. It is best not to presume that your favorite low-sodium food item has the same sodium content as it did a year ago.

Although cooking dried beans will provide less sodium at less cost, canned beans offer convenience. If you buy canned beans, we recommend buying low-sodium varieties, such as those from Westbrae, Eden, ShariAnn’s, or Whole Foods’ “365” brand, all of which contain no more than 140 milligrams of sodium per serving. Rinsing well is also recommended to remove a significant portion of the salt (as well as the compounds that cause flatulence). The exact amount of sodium remaining may be hard to determine; therefore, we analyzed the sodium content of each meal based on the nutrition label (unrinsed). If you want to use cooked dried beans instead of canned, assume each reference to a can of beans is equivalent to about 1 1/3 to 1 1/4 cups of cooked beans. Be sure to drain both canned or dried beans.

The sodium content in each recipe using plain beans is based on an assumption of 140 milligrams of sodium per serving, the highest content in any of the brands of canned beans listed. Using a brand with less sodium (or cooked dried beans) can only reduce the already low sodium content shown. The refried bean recipes use Eden’s chili beans (not technically refried), although ShariAnn’s also offers refried beans.

The approximate sodium content for each meal is listed in milligrams. Total sodium content for each day is listed to the right, and the average of all seven days is at the bottom of the column. Additionally, average sodium contents for the week’s breakfast, lunch, and dinner are specified at the bottom. Average sodium content in the snacks is not listed but is reflected in the average of all totals for all seven days. Other points to note:

- Portion sizes are assumed to be the standard for each food except as listed.
- “Ca” is the chemical abbreviation for “calcium.”

Sources:
- Manufacturer websites

References:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>BREAKFAST</th>
<th>LUNCH</th>
<th>DINNER</th>
<th>SNACK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUN</td>
<td>Hot Cereal with a Twist*&lt;br&gt;1 slice whole wheat toast&lt;br&gt;Trans fat-free margarine&lt;br&gt;Ca-fortified orange juice&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 250 mg</td>
<td>Bean-Vegetable Tacos*&lt;br&gt;Cornbread*&lt;br&gt;Apple&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 866 mg</td>
<td>Stuffed Peppers*&lt;br&gt;Steamed carrots&lt;br&gt;Mixed garden salad with raspberry vinaigrette&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 570 mg</td>
<td>Grilled plantain&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 8 mg</td>
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<td>MON</td>
<td>Hot Kashi pilaf cereal with banana slices and pecans&lt;br&gt;1 slice whole grain toast&lt;br&gt;Trans fat-free margarine&lt;br&gt;Ca-fortified orange juice&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 255 mg</td>
<td>Boca Roasted Onion Burger on pumpernickel bread with mustard, romaine, and tomato&lt;br&gt;Healthy Sweet Potato Fries*&lt;br&gt;Peach&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 710 mg</td>
<td>Chickpea Fruit Delight*&lt;br&gt;Millet (boiled in water, no salt added)&lt;br&gt;Tortilla chips&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 540 mg</td>
<td>Banana&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 1 mg</td>
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<td>TUES</td>
<td>Nature’s Path Flax Plus ready-to-eat cereal&lt;br&gt;½ cup Ca-fortified soymilk&lt;br&gt;¼ whole grain English muffin&lt;br&gt;Trans fat-free margarine&lt;br&gt;Grapefruit&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 600 mg</td>
<td>Pinto Bean Salad* on whole wheat pita with romaine and tomato&lt;br&gt;Carrot sticks&lt;br&gt;1 cup red grapes&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 500 mg</td>
<td>Tofu with Mustard-Fruit Sauce*&lt;br&gt;Quinoa (boiled in water, no salt added)&lt;br&gt;1 cup collard greens&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 227 mg</td>
<td>1 cup dried fruit and nut mix&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 3 mg</td>
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<td>WED</td>
<td>Regular oatmeal with apples, walnuts, cinnamon&lt;br&gt;1 slice whole wheat toast&lt;br&gt;Trans fat-free margarine&lt;br&gt;1 1/2 cup Soymilk&lt;br&gt;1 cup cubed watermelon&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 300 mg</td>
<td>Veggie chef salad with Soy Boy baked tofu and raspberry vinaigrette&lt;br&gt;Sweet-and-Sour Bean and Borley Salad*&lt;br&gt;Apple&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 500 mg</td>
<td>Simple Bean Stew*&lt;br&gt;Quinoa (boiled in water, no salt added)&lt;br&gt;1 cup pineapple cubes&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 65 mg</td>
<td>1 cup mango slices&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 4 mg</td>
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<td>THURS</td>
<td>Almond butter and jelly on whole grain bagel&lt;br&gt;1 cup fruit salad&lt;br&gt;½ cup Ca-fortified soymilk&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 800 mg</td>
<td>Black Bean-Corn Chowder*&lt;br&gt;Squash-Corn Muffin*&lt;br&gt;Celery sticks&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 419 mg</td>
<td>Vegetable stir-fry with Lightlife flax tempeh and Mr. Spice curry sauce&lt;br&gt;Barley (boiled, no salt added)&lt;br&gt;1 cup steamed broccoli&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 65 mg</td>
<td>Vegan Snack Cake*&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 172 mg</td>
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<td>FRI</td>
<td>Nature’s Path 8 Grain Flakes ready-to-eat cereal&lt;br&gt;½ cup Ca-fortified soymilk&lt;br&gt;½ whole grain English muffin&lt;br&gt;Trans fat-free margarine&lt;br&gt;Ca-fortified orange juice&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 410 mg</td>
<td>Chickpea Salad* on whole wheat with romaine and tomato&lt;br&gt;Carrot sticks&lt;br&gt;1 cup red grapes&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 485 mg</td>
<td>Roasted vegetables over pasta with Morningstar Burger Crumbles and Muir Glen Italian Herb Pasta Sauce&lt;br&gt;1 cup steamed broccoli&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 557 mg</td>
<td>1 cup cubed cantaloupe&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 16 mg</td>
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<td>SAT</td>
<td>Hash brown potatoes with Lightlife GimmeLean sausage, onions, and peppers&lt;br&gt;Grapefruit&lt;br&gt;½ cup Ca-fortified soymilk&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 450 mg</td>
<td>Indonesian Pasta Salad*&lt;br&gt;Whole grain eye crackers&lt;br&gt;1 cup fruit salad&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 615 mg</td>
<td>Tofu with Peanut Sauce and Collard Greens*&lt;br&gt;Brown rice&lt;br&gt;Peach&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 367 mg</td>
<td>Soy Delicious soy ice cream&lt;br&gt;Sodium: 85 mg</td>
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*See recipes. Breakfast avg: 438 mg Lunch avg: 585 mg Dinner avg: 428 mg Daily avg: 1,492 mg
HOT CEREAL
WITH A TWIST
(Serves 2)

1 cup whole grain cereal for cooking, such as oatmeal or Mother’s Four Grain cereal
1 cup orange juice
1/2 cup raisins, dried cranberries, or diced apple

Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan and cook over low heat, stirring frequently, for approximately 1-3 minutes. Cook until the cereal is fully cooked and the fruit is tender and hot.

Total calories per serving:
- 311 Calories
- 2 grams Fat
- 75 grams Carbohydrates
- 6 grams Protein
- 10 milligrams Sodium
- 8 grams Fiber

STUFFED PEPPERS
(Serves 6)

6 large green bell peppers, tops and seeds removed
2 teaspoons light olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Scrub and peel the potato. Slice about 1/4-inch thick. In a small bowl, combine oil and seasonings. Brush both sides of each slice with oil mixture, then bake 20-30 minutes or until brown.

Total calories per serving:
- 249 Calories
- 3 grams Fat
- 44 grams Carbohydrates
- 15 grams Protein
- 392 milligrams Sodium
- 10 grams Fiber

HEALTHY SWEET POTATO FRIES
(Serves 1)

1 sweet potato
1-2 Tablespoons olive oil

Your choice of low-sodium seasonings (Cajun, Italian, Mrs. Dash, etc.) to taste

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Scrub and peel the potato. Slice about 1/4-inch thick. In a small bowl, combine oil and seasonings. Brush both sides of each slice with oil mixture, then bake 20-30 minutes or until brown.

Total calories per serving:
- 249 Calories
- 14 grams Fat
- 33 grams Carbohydrates
- 2 grams Protein
- 20 milligrams Sodium
- 4 grams Fiber

PINTO BEAN SALAD
(Makes 6 servings)

This recipe is adapted from “Bean Bag: A Primer of Easy Bean Recipes” by Mary Clifford, RD, published in the November 1994 issue of Vegetarian Journal.

4 cups (approximately two-and-a-half 15-ounce cans) cooked pinto beans
2 Tablespoons dried minced onion
3 Tablespoons relish
2 teaspoons prepared mustard
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
Pepper to taste

Drain pinto beans. Using a food processor, a blender, or a potato masher and a large bowl, combine all ingredients until smooth.

Total calories per serving:
- 180 Calories
- 1 gram Fat
- 33 grams Carbohydrates
- 10 grams Protein
- 103 milligrams Sodium
- 10 grams Fiber

SIMPLE BEAN STEW
(Serves 3)

1 medium onion
1/4 teaspoon McCormick’s Season-All
2 Tablespoons olive oil
One 15-ounce can low-sodium beans (see article), rinsed and drained

Total calories per serving:
- 30 Calories
- 1 gram Fat
- 15 grams Carbohydrates
- 2 grams Protein
- 0 milligrams Sodium
- 0 grams Fiber
Additianal recipas frnm this meal plan are available at: <WWW.VPg.arg/JDUrnal/vj20D5issueVvj2DD5issUG4lDW-SDdilJm.htm>.

One 15-ounce can Muir Glen low-sodium stewed tomatoes, any flavor, such as basil and garlic
2 cups fresh collard greens, cleaned, stems removed, and diced
1½ cups diced vegetables of your choice (such as fresh mushrooms, bell peppers, carrots, peas, zucchini, corn, etc.)
½ cup water
1 Tablespoon hot sauce (optional)
2 Tablespoons molasses (optional)

In a large saucepan, sauté onions and Season-All in olive oil. When onions are soft, add remaining ingredients, except hot sauce and molasses. Simmer 20 minutes or until collard greens are fully cooked and sauce has thickened. Finish with hot sauce and molasses. Serve over whole grains, such as whole wheat pasta, brown rice, barley, or quinoa.

VEGAN SNACK CAKE
(Makes approximately twenty-eight 2" x 2" servings)

3½ cups unbleached flour
2 cups sugar (Use your favorite vegan variety.)
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups water
½ cup olive oil
2 teaspoons vinegar
1 teaspoon vanilla

In a mixing bowl, mix flour, sugar, baking soda, and salt with fork, breaking up the lumps. Mix in the remaining ingredients. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Pour mixture into a 9" x 13" pan. Bake for approximately 35-40 minutes or until toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Total calories per serving: 290
Carbohydrates: 38 grams
Sodium: 660 milligrams

Fat: 9 grams
Protein: 14 grams
Fiber: 12 grams

VARIATIONS
Five ways to spice up your Snack Cakes!

- Chocolate: ½ cup cocoa mixed in flour
- Chocolate spice: ½ cup cocoa and 1 Tablespoon allspice mixed in flour
- Chocolate chip: Omit vanilla, 2/3 cup walnuts mixed in flour, 2/3 cup chocolate chips over batter
- Double chocolate: ½ cup cocoa mixed in flour, 1 cup chocolate chips over batter
- Almond: ½ cup chopped almonds mixed in flour, 1/2 teaspoon almond extract mixed in with the vanilla

Total calories per serving: 145
Carbohydrates: 24 grams
Sodium: 172 milligrams
Fat: 5 grams
Protein: 1 gram
Fiber: <1 gram

Mark Rifkin recently completed a Master's in Health Education and his dietetic internship. He plans to be a dietitian in private practice focusing on plant-based diets.