The Truth About Sodium and Canned Foods

The Facts
• Not all canned foods have added salt.
• Many canned foods are, and always have been, low in sodium.
• Salt is not added to canned foods as a preservative; the canning process preserves the food.
• Salt is primarily used to enhance flavor, and in some cases to maintain texture.¹

Answering Demand for Lower Sodium
Today, there are more great-tasting, nutritious canned foods in no salt added, low sodium and reduced sodium options than ever before.

The Nutrition Facts Panel on canned food shows how much sodium is in a serving compared to daily recommendations.

Action Steps for Lowering Sodium Intake
For people looking to reduce sodium in the diet, it is easy to include canned foods at mealtimes. For example, consumers can:
1. Look for no salt added, low sodium or reduced sodium options; or
2. Drain the liquid and rinse canned beans and vegetables with water to reduce the sodium even further. Research shows that rinsing and draining canned beans reduces sodium content per serving by 41%. Draining alone results in a 36% sodium decrease.²

Salt vs. Sodium
The words “salt” and “sodium” tend to be used interchangeably, but there is a difference. Sodium is an essential nutrient that regulates blood volume and blood pressure, maintains fluid balance in the body, transmits nerve impulses and influences the contraction and relaxation of muscles. Salt is actually sodium chloride, which is made up of 40% sodium and 60% chloride.

This fact sheet was reviewed and approved by Registered Dietitians working with the Canned Food Alliance.

The Canned Food Alliance, a National Strategic Partner of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, is a consortium of steelmakers, can manufacturers, food processors and affiliate members that have joined together to drive increased consumption of canned foods by enhancing the perception of their numerous benefits, including nutrition, convenience, affordability and accessibility. For more information about canned food research, facts, resources, the canning process, family mealtime solutions, recipes that use canned foods and more, visit Mealtime.org.