

ROCKWOOD RETIREMENT  
COMMUNITIES SOUTH HILL

# Sodium Reduction Receives Many Compliments



*“After we made the changes, residents gave us so many compliments about the improved flavor of the soups that we started telling them ... what we had done.”*

*~ Dining Services Manager, Michelle Duke*



Rockwood salad bar

## What Worked and Why

In working with Spokane Regional Health District, as part of its Sodium Reduction in Communities Program, Director of Food Service at Rockwood South, Michelle Duke, was able to positively affect the diets of employees served in the employee café. Duke redesigned the employee dining area to include a soup and salad bar, sandwich station and sugar-free beverage area.

Employees receive a free meal per shift and fruit-infused water is now available in several areas. The café dining menu is on a five-week rotation and incorporates 22 different soups offered in the employee dining area.

All the soups are now made with lower sodium soup bases, which reduced sodium an average of 41 percent. Soup consumption stayed steady and employees did not notice recipe changes.

Duke explained, “After we made the changes, residents gave us so many compliments about the improved flavor of the soups that we started telling them and our employees what we had done.”

Duke went one step further and replaced all canned diced tomatoes with no added salt canned tomatoes in vegetable soups and pasta dishes.

She shared, “Being a part of the Sodium Reduction Project with the health district helped us find lower sodium products that we could purchase. We did not have time to research these products or do the nutritional analysis on our recipes so it was great to have their help. The health district showed us how much sodium we saved by only using lower sodium soup bases and tomato products.”

## The Challenge

As more people depend on cafeterias and restaurants for a large percentage of their daily food, it is important that these food outlets work toward sodium reduction. Food served at these locations often contains high amounts of sodium before they even reach the plate. This can lead to eating more than 1,000 milligrams of sodium above the recommended amount.

Lower sodium options are available but are often overlooked for fear of losing customers. Additionally, managers and cooks, in fast-paced food service environments, don't have the time to find lower sodium products and create recipes using these products.

In Spokane County, where one in three adults has high blood pressure, reducing sodium in these foods may be one of the ways to help lower customers' blood pressure and their possible risk for heart disease and stroke.

## About Rockwood Retirement Communities South Hill

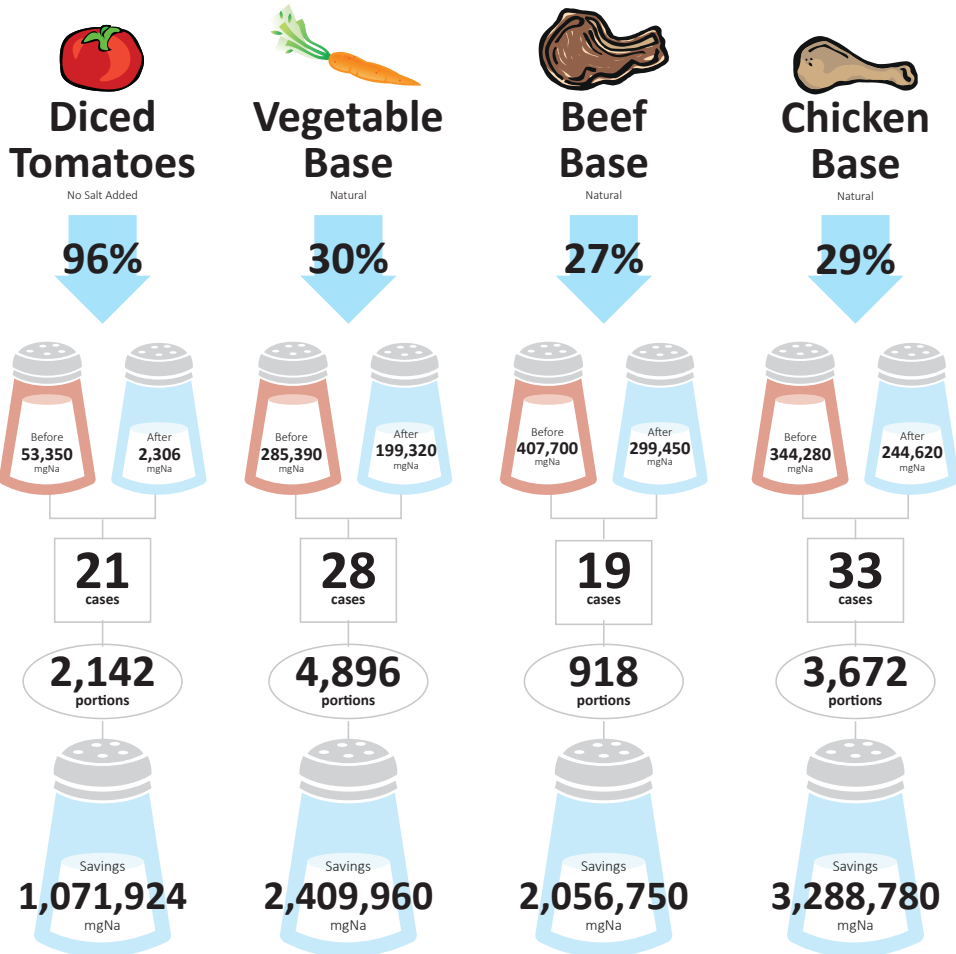
Rockwood Retirement Communities South Hill (Rockwood South) is home to three restaurants, an espresso café, and a lounge that are all able to make accommodations for residents' palates and dietary needs. With vegetarian, dairy-free and gluten-free dining options, Rockwood South offers its 450 residents convenient or gourmet dining experiences, with fresh food that is made from scratch. Rockwood South Hill also has a staff of 300, approximately 150 of whom dine daily in the employee café.

## Sustainability

The lower sodium options, infused waters, and healthier choices are supported by Rockwood Retirement Communities' (Rockwood) executive leadership as part of its employee wellness program. Purchasing lower sodium products is now part of Rockwood's standard ordering process. Duke, with the support of her Executive Chef, Mark Koski, and Sous Chef, Mary James, continues to explore new flavor development techniques in an effort to further expand sodium reduction efforts. Sodium reduction savings in employee soups was 2,155,770 milligrams. Other menu substitutions and additions during the first four months of the project resulted in 8,827,414 milligrams of reduced sodium. In common measurements this is 78 salt rounds (26 ounces each) or 13,338 teaspoons of salt savings for employees and residents.

# Rockwood Retirement South

June 2016 - September 2016



## Total Milligrams of Sodium Saved: 8,827,414

Equivalent to 77 containers (26 oz/ea) or 13,167 tsp of salt\*

\*USDA recommended daily allowance of salt for an adult is 1 tsp

*“We did not have time to research these products or do the nutritional analysis on our recipes so it was great to have their [Spokane Regional Health District’s] help.”*

*~Dining Services Manager, Michelle Duke*

# Spokane Regional Health District's Role

Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) worked with DOH and two other local health jurisdictions to implement a three-year Sodium Reduction in Communities grant (2014-2016) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). SRHD used the following methods to help partners make changes.

- Encourage organizations to follow Washington Department of *Health's Healthy Nutrition Guidelines* (or similar guidelines).
- Assist partners in identifying key recipes and strategies to reduce sodium by at least 25 percent.
- Work with food vendors to increase the availability and accessibility of lower sodium products.
- Help with signage and placement of low sodium foods to increase visibility and customer awareness while maintaining or increasing sales of these items.
- Increase food service directors and cooks' knowledge of hidden sources of sodium and offer culinary training to increase flavor enhancement skills.



**Spokane Regional Health District – Sodium Reduction**  
1101 W. College Ave., #200, Spokane, WA 99201  
TEL 509.324.1531 | TDD 509.324.1464 | [srhd.org](http://srhd.org)

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