

Extension

July 2014 Newsletter

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"Can You Taste the Sodium in the Foods You Eat?"

Glenda Wentworth

Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent, Eagle County

Snack on a granola bar and open a can of soup for lunch. Then nibble on chips midafternoon and pop a pizza in the microwave for supper. Do you know how much sodium you consumed in one day? It is a challenge to eat a low sodium diet. Just read the Nutrition Facts label and your eyes will be open to the amount of salt that is added to foods.

According to the 2010 American Dietary Guidelines, the average American (ages 2 years and older) eats approximately 3,400 milligrams (mg) per day. This means we are consuming more sodium than needed.

The maximum recommended level of sodium intake is 2,300 mg daily, (about one teaspoon of salt). The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for American sodium recommendations for individuals are:

- 1 to 3 years: 1,000 mg/day
- 4 to 8 years: 1,200 mg/day
- 9 to 50 years is 1,500 mg per day
- 51 to 70 years: 1,300 mg/ day
- 71 years and older: 1,200 mg/day

What is Sodium?

Sodium is an important mineral and electrolyte necessary for many functions in the body. It has an important role in maintaining water balance within cells. However, sodium is only needed small quantities. Sodium is a part of salt. Table salt, also known as sodium chloride, is 40% sodium and 60% chloride.

What is the Salt-Sodium Conversion?

- 1/4 teaspoon of salt = 500 milligrams of sodium
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt = 1,000 milligrams of sodium
- 3/4 teaspoon of salt = 1,500 milligrams of sodium
- 1 teaspoon of salt = 2,000 milligrams of sodium

What is the problem?

Having too much sodium in your diet may increase your blood pressure and raise your risk for heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. Sodium is in almost all of the foods we eat, especially processed, store bought and restaurant and fast food items. Other high sodium foods include cheese, condiments, chips, salad dressings and many breakfast cereals.



Tips for Success

- Consume more fresh foods and fewer processed foods that are high in sodium.
- Use herbs to flavor foods.
- You have more control over sodium when you make your own foods.
- Use little or no salt-containing seasonings when cooking or eating foods.
- When cooking use canola oil or olive oil, which contain less sodium than butter or margarine.
- Rinse canned vegetables before heating to remove some sodium.
- Read the Nutrition Facts label for the sodium content of foods.
- Purchase foods that are low in sodium.
- When eating at restaurants, ask that salt not be added to your food. Request that sauces and salad dressings be served “on the side” as you will eat less.

Let's Talk

Talk to children about how the taste for salty food is something we learn. That cravings for salty foods can be reduced over a period of time. The first step in decreasing a desire for salty foods is to gradually decrease your daily sodium intake. Start by taking the salt shaker off the table. Decrease your intake by about 500 mg per day for one month. Then continue to decrease it by 500 mg at a time until you reach a daily sodium intake that is within the recommended range. Studies have shown that the less sodium you consume the less your taste buds crave it. When you lower your preference for salt, you actually appreciate a wider variety of flavors. Talk to children about how you are going to experiment with flavorful herbs and spices in your favorite recipes. That will set your family up to be smart about their sodium intake.

Recipe for Health: Convenience Salt-Free Seasoning Mix

- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1-1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1-1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon dill weed
- 2 teaspoons paprika

Combine and place in an airtight container; store in a cool place. Use in place of salt to season food.

Retrieved on May 7, 2014 from: <http://www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/PDFpubs/4029.pdf>

Herb/Food Combinations

- Basil: tomatoes
- Chives: dips, potatoes, tomatoes,
- Cilantro: Mexican, Asian and Caribbean cooking
- Dill: Carrots, cottage cheese, fish, green beans, potatoes, tomatoes
- Mint: carrots, fruit salads,
- Oregano: peppers, tomatoes
- Parsley: potato salad
- Rosemary: chicken, fish, lamb, pork, roasted potatoes, soups, stews,
- Sage: poultry seasoning, stuffing's
- Tarragon: chicken, eggs, fish
- Thyme: Eggs, lima beans, potatoes, poultry, summer squash, tomatoes

