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Changing Your Salt Habit Starts at the Grocery Store

By ARA Content

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by: **ARA Content**

(ARA) – Many medical experts would agree that being worth your weight in salt in today's society is not quite as valuable as it may have been at one time. In fact, researchers and doctors across the world have found that a diet high in sodium contributes to a number of health risks, including high blood pressure.

This is not breaking news to many Americans, especially those already at a high risk of heart disease, stroke and certain kinds of cancers. The number of Americans at a high risk for high blood pressure alone has grown to nearly 50 million. It also may not come as a surprise to the many people whose doctors have continuously recommended a low-sodium diet in an attempt to decrease these and other health conditions. But this may be harder than simply removing the salt shaker from the dinner table.

Over 70 percent of a person's salt intake is derived from processed foods, so skipping that sprinkling of salt at dinner is not a sufficient way to cut the salt in your diet. Using salt substitutes or alternatives like NoSalt is an easy way to add flavor to your food without the sodium. Another way to prevent sodium from entering your kitchen and your body is to keep your eyes open at the food source itself, the grocery store.

Following these grocery shopping tips can help reduce the salt in you and your family's diet:

Always Read the Label

Salt is a substance with many different names. So even if you make the extra effort to read food labels and search for the amount of salt in the product, it can be difficult to determine. The following list contains a few of salt's aliases: sodium chloride, sodium bicarbonate, sodium benzoate, monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium nitrate and disodium. Other products with a large sodium content include hydrolyzed vegetable protein, soy sauce, miso and brine.

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Interpreting the Labels

The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) is making an effort to create public awareness of the amount of salt in store products. "By appropriately labeling, we are attempting to inform the public and those who want to keep their sodium intake down as to the amount of sodium they are consuming," says Ida Yoder, a chemist with the FDA's over-the-counter drug products division.

But some salt descriptors are not so cut and dry. Use the following list as a guideline to help determine the approximate number of milligrams of salt in a product:

Sodium free – Contains less than 5 mg of sodium per serving

Very low sodium – 35 mg or less per serving

Low Sodium – 140 mg or less per serving

Reduced Sodium – Contains at least 25 percent less sodium than the original product

Without added salt – No salt is added during processing to a product which would normally have salt added

No salt added – Unsalted

Fresh is Best

Avoid processed foods in the grocery store and head directly to the fresh fruit and vegetable aisle instead. Rather than adding salt to these fresh food items while cooking, use unsalted butter or salt alternatives. Many salt substitutes, such as NoSalt, are sodium-free but taste like the real thing. "By incorporating salt substitutes and other spices into your cooking, you can still add flavor to food while skipping the sodium," says Janet Andreas, a Home Economist with Reckitt Benckiser. She also recommends using a variety of spice substitutes as salt alternatives like Seasoned NoSalt.

If you do buy canned vegetables, rinsing them in water for one minute can reduce their sodium content by 40 percent. Also, it is important to resist the temptation of fast food, which also usually has a high salt content.

While making these tips habits on your trips to the grocery store can help reduce your sodium intake, health professionals recommend an even larger, overall change in diet. One diet that specifically addresses the issue of hypertension is the Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension (DASH), a diet formulated by clinicians and researchers at Harvard University.

The DASH diet is based on increased servings of fruits and vegetables and the inclusion of low fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry and fish. The diet provides the right amount of fiber, adequate vitamins and antioxidants while limiting sodium and fat intake.

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Consulting with your physician is the best and safest ways to address high blood pressure and the treatment of other health concerns. But by taking the initiative to start eating a healthier diet, you begin taking responsibility for your own health and well-being.

Reckitt Benckiser, the makers of NoSalt, has published a brochure on how to manage sodium intake and live an overall healthier lifestyle. To receive a free booklet entitled "Changing for Life," call toll free at 1-800-841-1256.

Courtesy ARA Content,

; e-mail:

EDITOR'S NOTE: NoSalt is a registered trademark of Reckitt Benckiser.

Salt saves, salt kills.

By Dr. Donald A. Miller

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Salt is essential to health. This means sodium chloride and potassium chloride, with traces of other mineral salts.

If you sweat a lot at work or play, lack of salt can cause "heat stroke".

Salt can kill. Excess salt is probably the biggest dietary health risk factor after fats, in any country that uses a lot of prepared foods.

Avoid salty-fatty snack foods. Restrict the salt added to foods during cooking.

As a kid, I used to salt everything at meal time, often before even tasting. Now, any foods I prepare, I add no salt, outside of reduced salt versions of soy sauce. And I am very sensitive to the taste of excess salt in bought meals, canned goods, and other prepared foods.

* Diet with FACTS, not Fat-Burner MYTHS. *

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