

HEALTHWATCH
Salt: Spice of Life or Health
Hazard?

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What would we do without salt? Food would be bland. We need it, in small amounts, to keep our bodies in proper electrolyte balance. Salt is used to preserve and disinfect. Salt is referred to in the Bible as that which adds flavor and meaning; that which is set apart...we are "the salt of the Earth".

It's understandable why salt is called "*the spice of life*". Too much salt, though, can be detrimental to our health. Its effects on blood pressure are well documented. An increase in salt intake increases blood pressure. A prolonged increase in blood pressure can lead to other serious heart and kidney problems. Dr. Bibbins-Domingo at the University of California, San Francisco, found that by reducing salt intake by about half, we would decrease new cases of heart disease, stroke and heart attacks by 10's of thousands.

The average American consumes nearly twice the recommended amount of salt. Table salt is 90% sodium. **The daily sodium recommendation for adults is less than 2400 mg, or about 1 teaspoon of salt.** Those with high blood pressure should get less than 1500 mg. sodium daily (2/3 teaspoon). That recommendation includes all salt consumed...only about 25% of salt intake comes from the shaker, the remainder is found in processed and packaged foods.

It takes about 6 weeks to change your taste preferences. By gradually reducing your sodium intake over time, you will decrease your desire for salty foods.

Follow these tips to lower your Sodium intake:

- Read nutrition labels and choose foods that have less than 5% of the daily value of sodium per serving.
- Use fresh meats rather than canned, smoked or processed.
- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables.
- Rinse canned foods to remove some of the sodium.
- Use Kosher salt instead, which is coarser and has half the amount of sodium per teaspoon. Or try a low sodium salt substitute in your salt shaker.
- Keep salt in a small bowl instead of a shaker, or use a pepper shaker for salt. You will use less salt when you use just a pinch, shake from a shaker that delivers less.
- When cooking, replace salt with herbs, spices, saltless seasoning blends (Mrs. Dash varieties), lime, lemon, and vinegars.
- Mix low sodium foods with salty food (eg salted nuts with unsalted), gradually increasing the amount of low sodium variety as you get accustomed to the flavor.
- Avoid flavored chips which are loaded with sodium.
- Look for hidden forms of sodium in processed foods: MSG, sodium citrate, baking soda, baking powder, and sodium bicarbonate.
- Avoid sports drinks. They are very high in sodium and only necessary for endurance athletes.

Even a modest reduction in sodium can have huge health benefits. So let's keep the "salt" in our personalities and out of our diet.

**Blood Pressure Checks after the
service Sunday, May 23**