

Advisor

For Members of National Consumers Benefits Association



The Salty Stuff

Salt, Blood Pressure, and Your Health

Salt is essential to our body's fluids. That's likely why we evolved to enjoy its taste. On the other hand, anyone who's gotten a mouth full of seawater knows that too much salt tastes terrible. Maybe your body's trying to tell you something. It turns out that too much salt can lead to a host of health problems.

(NIH News in Health) - Dietary salt, or table salt, is made from two chemical elements: sodium and chloride. That's why its chemical name is sodium chloride. It's the sodium part that's been tied to health problems. But since most of the sodium we ingest is from salt, it's difficult to separate the effects of salt and sodium in many studies.

Health Effects

"The best-known effect of sodium on health is the relationship between sodium and blood pressure," explains Dr. Holly Nicastro, an NIH nutrition research expert. Dozens of studies, in both animals and people, have linked a higher salt intake with higher blood pressure. Reducing salt intake, on the other hand, lowers blood pressure.

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of arteries as the heart pumps out blood. When this pressure rises—a condition called high blood pressure, or hypertension—it can damage the body in many ways over time. High blood pressure has been linked to heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, and other

Cut Back on Sodium

- Look at Nutrition Facts labels and try to choose prepared foods that have less than 5% of the Daily Value of sodium per serving.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat, rather than canned, smoked, or processed.
- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables that have no added salt.
- Rinse canned foods to remove some of the sodium.
- Add less salt—or none—when cooking.
- Use reduced-sodium bouillon, dressings, and sauces like soy sauce.
- Use fresh herbs and buy spices and blends without added salt.
- Cook at home instead of eating out, when possible. But when eating out, ask that no extra salt be added to your food.

health problems.

There are two blood pressure numbers, and they're usually written with one above or before the other. Systolic, the first, is the pressure when the heart beats, pumping blood through the arteries. Diastolic is the pressure when the heart is at rest between beats. The numbers 120/80 mmHg are the ones you should aim to keep your blood pressure below.

Some research also suggests that excessive sodium intake increases the risk of stomach cancer. Scientists continue to investigate this possible connection.

Researchers do know that not everyone is equally sensitive to salt. "From our experiments, we know there's lots of variation in the blood pressure response to sodium intake," Nicastro says. Certain groups of people see greater reductions in blood pressure when they lower their salt intake: African-Americans, older adults, and people with blood pressure above normal.

"Within those groups, there's a lot of variation between people," Nicastro says. But about 1 in 3 adults nationwide has high blood pressure right now. Another third have elevated blood pressure, meaning their numbers are high enough to put them at risk to develop high blood pressure. In light of this, she says, "It's really important for the majority of U.S. adults to reduce their blood pressure."

How Much Salt?

Experts recommend that adults take in less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day—that's what's in about 6 grams of salt, or about a teaspoon. People with high blood pressure should shoot for 1,500 mg. But right now, American adults eat an average of about 3,600 mg of sodium per day.

Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo at the University of California, San Francisco, led an NIH-funded study that used computer modeling to explore the effects of a modest reduction in salt intake in the United States. The researchers found that reducing salt intake by 3 grams per day (1,200 mg of sodium) could cut the number of new cases of heart disease each year by as many as 120,000, stroke by 66,000, and heart attack by nearly 100,000. It could also prevent up to 92,000 deaths each year.

All segments of the population would benefit, with African-Americans having the greatest improvements overall. Women would particularly benefit from reductions in stroke, older adults from a decline in heart disease, and younger adults from fewer deaths.

Reducing Salt

Some countries have tried to lower salt intake using various strategies, such as working with industry to reduce the salt content in processed foods, requiring labels on ready-to-eat foods, and educating the public. The UK achieved a 15% reduction in salt

consumption between 2003 and 2011. During this time, deaths from stroke fell by 42% and from heart disease by 40%.

But wouldn't we miss the taste? "Several studies have shown that as you gradually reduce sodium intake, you lessen your desire for salty food," Nicastro says. And surveys of people across the UK found that most people didn't notice any difference in the taste of their food.

"A very modest decrease in the amount of salt, hardly detectable in the taste of food, can have dramatic health benefits for the U.S.," Bibbins-Domingo stresses.

The salt we add to our food actually accounts for about 10% of our salt consumption. Most of the salt we eat comes in processed foods from stores, restaurants, and dining halls. You may already know that fast food, cold cuts, and canned foods tend to have a lot of salt.

"Many people don't realize that a lot of our salt is from breads and cereals," Bibbins-Domingo says. Studies have found that about 15 to 20% of the sodium in the average American's diet comes from grain products, such as breads, cereals, crackers, and chips.

"In terms of advice, I think the best guidance we have is for people to pay attention to nutrition facts on the labels," Nicastro says. "The percent daily value is a better guide than the language that's used on food labels like 'low-salt.' These labels can be confusing, because they have very defined technical meanings." Try to select foods, she advises, with less than 5% of the daily value of salt per serving.

Making Changes

Even small salt reductions can affect your blood pressure. If you can't find a low-salt alternative to a particular food, it still helps to pick something that's lower than what you're already consuming.

"You can find remarkable variation in the amount of salt across major brands of food," Bibbins-Domingo says. "Even without choosing something labeled 'low sodium,' you can often find a lower-sodium alternative."

Beyond salt, a healthy eating plan can help keep your blood pressure under control. Check out NIH's Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan. Other lifestyle measures can help you keep your blood pressure down, too. Lose weight if you're overweight or obese. Get regular physical activity. Quit smoking. Manage your stress. The more of these steps you take, the more likely you'll be to avoid related health problems.

Why not start now? Make small changes at first, and then keep working to gradually lower your family's salt intake.



You're Never Too Old Keep Active as You Age

(NIH News in Health) - We've all heard that exercise is good for you. Did you know that it's as true for older people as it is for any age group? You're never too old to get moving, get stronger, and improve your health.

Fitting exercise and physical activity into your day can enhance your life in so many ways. Regular physical activity can improve your balance and boost or maintain your strength and fitness. It may also improve your mood and help you manage or lessen the impact of conditions like diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis, and depression.

Despite these proven benefits, exercise and physical activity rates among older people are surprisingly low. Only about 30% of people ages 45 to 64 say they engage in regular leisure-time physical activity. This falls to 15% of those between the ages of 65 and 74 and 5% of people age 85 and older.

Experts recommend four types of exercise for older adults: endurance, balance, strength, and flexibility. Brisk walking, dancing, and other endurance exercises improve the health of your heart,

lungs, and circulatory system. These exercises can make it easier for you to mow the lawn, climb stairs, and do other daily activities. Strength exercises include lifting weights or using resistance bands. They can increase muscle strength to help with activities such as carrying groceries or lifting grandchildren. Balance exercises can help prevent falls—a major health risk for older adults. Stretching, or flexibility exercises, can give you more freedom of movement for bending to tie your shoes or looking over your shoulder as you back out of the driveway.

"Even if you haven't been active previously, it's important to get started and stay active," says Dr. Richard J. Hodes, director of NIH's National Institute on Aging. "We know that people want to live independently for as long as they possibly can. By exercising regularly and including more physical activity in their daily routine, older people can preserve their physical function, which is key to doing the everyday things they want to do."

To help you get started and keep moving, NIH brought together some of the nation's leading

experts on aging, exercise, and motivation. They developed a guide to exercise for older adults. The guide serves as the basis for a national exercise and physical activity campaign for people ages 50 and older. It's called Go4Life.

"Older adults can exercise safely, even those who have physical limitations," Hodes says. "Go4Life is based on studies showing the benefits of exercise and physical activity for older people, including those with chronic health conditions."

Go4Life exercises are designed to be done safely at home without special equipment or clothing. The free book *Exercise & Physical Activity: Your Everyday Guide* from the National Institute on Aging is the core resource for the campaign. Other free materials, such as tip sheets, are also available. *Workout to Go*, a mini exercise guide, shows you how you can be active anytime, anywhere.

To learn more, visit the Go4Life website at go4life.nia.nih.gov. You'll find exercises, success stories, and tips to help you stay motivated. Or call 1-800-222-2225, or e-mail niaic@nia.nih.gov.

Help Yourself to Healthier Hummus



(Family Features) Whether you're hosting a houseful of guests or simply keeping your family's hunger at bay before dinner, appetizers can be a home chef's best friend. Simple options like dips allow for personalization while keeping cook time to a minimum.

The next time you're looking for a quick fix, consider this Caramelized Sweet Onion Hummus recipe that's ideal for pairing with pita bread, veggies or crackers. With the layered flavor, color and texture of onions serving as a key ingredient, it's a nutritious substitute for less health-conscious appetizers and snacks.

In fact, onions can be called nature's ninja because of their many "skills." Onions add abundant flavor to a wide variety of foods with just 45 calories per serving as a source of dietary fiber, vitamin C, vitamin B6, potassium and other key nutrients such as folate, calcium and iron. They are also rich in heart-healthy nutrients and have been shown to help prevent some cancers.

Caramelized Sweet Onion Hummus

Recipe courtesy of the National Onion Association

- 1 whole garlic head
- 4 tablespoons, plus 1 teaspoon, extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 large sweet onion, thinly sliced
- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (about 1/2 lemon)
- 1/2 cup tahini (toasted ground sesame seeds)
- 1 teaspoon salt

Heat oven to 350 F.

Cut top of garlic head off and place cut-side down on pan; drizzle with 1 teaspoon olive oil. Bake 20-30 minutes, or until garlic is soft. Once cool, squeeze garlic from each clove.

In large skillet over medium-high heat, cook onion in 1 tablespoon olive oil. Stir onion frequently until slices begin to brown. Reduce heat to low and continue cooking until onions are soft and reach medium brown color.

Rinse and drain chickpeas; reserve 3 tablespoons liquid.

In food processor, blend chickpeas, reserved liquid, lemon juice, tahini, garlic, salt, remaining olive oil and onions until combined and smooth. Serve with pita bread, veggies or crackers.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting of the Members of National Consumer Benefits Association will be held at 1630 Des Peres Road, St. Louis, MO 63131, on Friday, December 18, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. (CST) for election of Directors and for the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting and any adjournment thereof.

The above notice is given pursuant to the By-Laws of the Association.

PROXY

National Consumer Benefits Association December 18, 2020 Annual Meeting of Members THIS PROXY IS SOLICITED ON BEHALF OF NATIONAL CONSUMER BENEFITS ASSOCIATION

The undersigned member of National Consumer Benefits Association does hereby constitute and appoint the President of National Consumer Benefits Association, the true and lawful attorney(s) of the undersigned with full power of substitution, to appear and act as the proxy or proxies of the undersigned at the Annual Meeting of the Members of National Consumer Benefits Association and at any and all adjournments thereof, and to vote for and in the name, place and stead of the undersigned, as fully as the undersigned might or could do if personally present, as set forth below:

1. FOR [], or to [] WITHHOLD AUTHORITY to vote for, the following nominees for Board of Directors:
Rick Price, Doug Pusateri, and Larry Rigby
2. In their discretion, the proxies are authorized to vote upon such other business as may properly come before the Meeting.

This proxy, when properly executed, will be voted in the manner directed by the undersigned member. If no direction is made, this proxy will be voted for the election of directors and officers.

DATED: _____, 2020

Signature _____

Name (please print) _____

Please date and sign and return promptly to 1630 Des Peres Road, St. Louis, MO 63131 whether or not you expect to attend this meeting. The Proxy is revocable and will not affect your right to vote in person in the event that you attend the meeting.

St. Louis, Missouri
November 16, 2020
Date

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For information regarding your membership
and association services, call or write:

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Articles in this newsletter are meant to be informative, enlightening, and helpful to you. While all information contained herein is meant to be completely factual, it is always subject to change. Articles are not intended to provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.