

Do it Well

Easy ways to achieve health and wellness

QUARTER **04**
2017



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Sodium in Your Diet: Use the Nutrition Facts Label and Reduce Your Intake

You've probably heard that most Americans eat too much sodium, and too much sodium can raise blood pressure — which can have serious health consequences if not treated.

Despite what many people think, use of the salt shaker is not the main cause of too much sodium in your diet. In fact, about 75% of dietary sodium comes from eating packaged and restaurant foods, whereas only a small portion (11%) comes from salt added to food when cooking or eating. But, even though sodium is already in these foods when you purchase them, there are still some steps you can follow to lower your daily sodium intake.

Read the Label

Packaged foods and beverages can contain high levels of sodium, whether or not they taste salty. That's why it's important to use the Nutrition Facts Label to check the sodium content.

- **Understand the Daily Value.** The Daily Values are the amounts of nutrients recommended per day for Americans four years of age and older. The Daily Value for sodium is less than 2,400 milligrams (mg) per day. That's about one teaspoon of salt.



“Sodium in Your Diet ...” *continued*

- **Use the Percent Daily Value (%DV) as a tool.** The %DV tells you how much of a nutrient is in one serving of a food. The %DV is based on 100% of the Daily Value for sodium. When comparing and choosing foods, pick the food with a lower %DV of sodium. As a general rule:
 - 5% DV or less of sodium per serving is low
 - 20% DV or more of sodium per serving is high
- **Pay attention to serving sizes.** The %DV listed is for one serving, but one package may contain more than one serving. Be sure to look at the serving size to determine how many servings you’re actually consuming.

Salt and Sodium: Defined

The words “salt” and “sodium” are often used interchangeably, but they don’t mean the same thing. Salt (also known by its chemical name, sodium chloride) is a crystal-like compound that is abundant in nature and is used to flavor and preserve food. Sodium is a mineral, and one of the chemical elements found in salt.

Sodium as a Food Ingredient

As a food ingredient, sodium has multiple uses, such as for curing meat, baking, thickening, retaining moisture, enhancing flavor (including the flavor of other ingredients), and as a preservative. Some common food additives – like monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium bicarbonate (baking soda), sodium nitrite, and sodium benzoate – also contain sodium and contribute (in lesser amounts) to the total amount of “sodium” listed on the Nutrition Facts Label.

Surprisingly, some foods that don’t taste salty can still be high in sodium, which is why using taste alone is not an accurate way to judge a food’s sodium content. For example, while some foods that are high in sodium (like pickles and soy sauce) taste salty, there are also many foods (like cereals and pastries) that contain sodium but don’t taste salty. Also, some foods that you may eat several times a day (such as breads) can add up to a lot of sodium over the course of a day, even though an individual serving may not be high in sodium.

Check the Package for Nutrient Claims

You can also check for nutrient claims on food and beverage packages to quickly identify those that may contain less sodium. Here’s a guide to common claims and what they mean:

WHAT IT SAYS	WHAT IT MEANS
Salt/Sodium-Free	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
Very Low Sodium	35 mg of sodium or less per serving
Low Sodium	140 mg of sodium or less per serving
Reduced Sodium	At least 25% less sodium than the regular product
Light in Sodium or Lightly Salted	At least 50% less sodium than the regular product
No-Salt-Added or Unsalted	No salt is added during processing – but these products may not be salt/sodium-free unless stated

Sodium and Blood Pressure

Sodium attracts water, and a high-sodium diet draws water into the bloodstream, which can increase the volume of blood and subsequently your blood pressure. High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is a condition in which blood pressure remains elevated over time. Hypertension makes the heart work harder, and the high force of the blood flow can harm arteries and organs (such as the heart, kidneys, brain and eyes).

And since blood pressure normally rises with age, limiting your sodium intake becomes even more important each year. The good news is that eating less sodium can help lower blood pressure, which in turn, can help reduce your risk of developing these serious medical conditions.

Potassium Helps!

Did you know that sodium and potassium both affect blood pressure? **Eating enough potassium each day can help lower blood pressure** by balancing out some of the harmful effects that sodium can have on blood pressure. Look for foods rich in potassium, such as bananas, beet greens, juices (carrot, orange, pomegranate, and prune), yogurt (non-fat and low-fat), potatoes, spinach, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and tomato products, and white beans.

Know Your Numbers

Sodium is an essential nutrient and is needed by the body in relatively small amounts (provided that substantial sweating does not occur) to maintain a balance of body fluids and keep muscles and nerves running smoothly. However, most Americans eat too much of it — and they may not even know it.

Americans eat on average over 3,400 mg of sodium per day, with intakes generally higher for men than women. However, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that adults and children ages 14 years and older limit sodium intake to less than 2,400 mg per day — that’s equal to about 1 teaspoon of salt.

Adults with hypertension and prehypertension should further reduce their sodium intake to 1,500 mg per day, which can result in even greater blood pressure reduction. So, talk to your health care provider about whether you’re at risk for high blood pressure, and use the Nutrition Facts Label as your tool to evaluate how much sodium you’re eating and drinking.



Simple Tips for Healthy Eyes

Your eyes are an important part of your health. You can do many things to keep them healthy and make sure you're seeing your best. Follow these simple guidelines for maintaining healthy eyes well into your golden years.

Have a comprehensive dilated eye exam. You might think your vision is fine or that your eyes are healthy, but visiting your eye care professional for a comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to really be sure. When it comes to common vision problems, some people don't realize they could see better with glasses or contact lenses. In addition, many common eye diseases, such as glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, and age-related macular degeneration, often have no warning signs. A dilated eye exam is the only way to detect these diseases in their early stages.

Know your family's eye health history. Talk to your family members about their eye health history. It's important to know if anyone has been diagnosed with an eye disease or condition, since many are hereditary. This information will help to determine if you're at higher risk for developing an eye disease or condition.

Eat right to protect your sight. You've heard that carrots are good for your eyes. But eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables — particularly dark leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, or collard greens — is important for keeping your eyes healthy, too. Research has also shown there are eye health benefits from eating fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna and halibut.

Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing diabetes and other systemic conditions, which can lead to vision loss, such as diabetic eye disease or glaucoma. If you're having trouble maintaining a healthy weight, talk to your doctor.

Wear protective eyewear. Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing activities around the home. Protective eyewear includes safety glasses and goggles, safety shields, and eye guards specially designed to provide the correct protection for the activity in which you're engaged. Most protective eyewear lenses are made of polycarbonate, which is 10 times stronger than other plastics. Many eye care providers sell protective eyewear, as do some sporting goods stores.

Quit smoking or never start. Smoking is as bad for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body. Research has linked smoking to an increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, and optic nerve damage, all of which can lead to blindness.

Be cool and wear your shades. Sunglasses are a great fashion accessory, but their most important job is to protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet rays. When purchasing sunglasses, look for ones that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation.

Give your eyes a rest. If you spend a lot of time at the computer or focusing on any one thing, you sometimes forget to blink and your eyes can get fatigued. Try the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds. This short exercise can help reduce eyestrain.

Clean your hands and your contact lenses — properly. To avoid the risk of infection, always wash your hands thoroughly before putting in or taking out your contact lenses. Make sure to disinfect contact lenses as instructed and replace them as appropriate.

Practice workplace eye safety. Employers are required to provide a safe work environment. When protective eyewear is required as a part of your job, make a habit of wearing the appropriate type at all times, and encourage your coworkers to do the same.

Source: Centers for Disease Control. www.cdc.gov. Accessed Sept. 6, 2017.

Conscientious Cuisine: Cranberry Flax Pumpkin Bread

Two of the season's most-loved foods come together in this delicious homemade bread. Pumpkin's potent beta-carotene and cranberries' anthocyanin phytochemicals are blended together with flaxseed's protective omega-3 fats. Flax is also being studied for its lignans, plant estrogens which may play a role in protecting against breast cancer.

Ingredients

- Canola oil spray
- 1/2 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- 1/2 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup ground flaxseed
- 2/3 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1/4 cup 100 percent apple juice

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat 8 x 4-inch loaf pan with canola oil spray and set aside.
2. In large bowl, combine whole-wheat pastry flour, all-purpose flour, flaxseed, sugar, baking soda and salt and set aside. In medium bowl, lightly beat eggs. Whisk in pumpkin, canola oil, applesauce, apple juice, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg. Stir in dried cranberries. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients, mixing until all dry ingredients are incorporated into batter. Do not beat or overmix. Pour batter into prepared pan.
3. Bake for 50-60 minutes, until wooden toothpick inserted into center comes out clean. Cool in pan on wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove bread from pan and continue cooling on rack.

Makes: 12 servings

Nutrition: 206 calories, 8 g total fat, 33 g carbohydrate, 3 g dietary fiber, 4 g protein, 221 mg sodium.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research. www.aicr.org. Accessed Sept. 2, 2017.



- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1 cup dried cranberries



Get Going: Wrist Stretches

Here are some general stretches for the wrists and arms. Stretching may help prevent arm problems such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

Warm-up stretches

- Rotate your wrist up, down and from side to side. Repeat four times.
- Stretch your thumb by pulling it back gently, holding it and then releasing it. Repeat four times.

Prayer stretch

1. Start with your palms together in front of your chest just below your chin.
2. Slowly lower your hands toward your waistline, keeping your hands close to your stomach and your palms together, until you feel a mild to moderate stretch under your forearms.
3. Hold for at least 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat two to four times.

If your hand and wrist get sore after using a computer mouse, set an alarm on your computer to go off every 15 minutes as a reminder to lift your hand off the mouse, wiggle your fingers and stretch your hand muscles. Do not do any stretch or movement that is uncomfortable or painful.

- Make a fist. Slide your fingers upward until they are pointing up straight. Repeat five to 10 times.
- Make a fist. Release your hand and fan out your fingers, stretching them as far as you can. Repeat five to 10 times.

Sources: www.arthritis.org and www.livestrong.org. Accessed Sept. 6, 2017.



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