



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Where's the Sodium?

Food Categories Contributing the Most to Sodium Consumption — United States, 2007–2008

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

A dash of salt can liven up any meal, but there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. Excessive sodium consumption increases blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Dr. Molly Cogswell is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of a low-sodium diet. Welcome to the show, Molly.

[Dr. Cogswell] Thank you. I'm happy to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Molly, what is a healthy level of sodium consumption?

[Dr. Cogswell] Well Bob, Americans eat too much sodium, and most of our sodium comes from salt. Everyone should try to reduce the amount of sodium they eat from foods and beverages to less than twenty-three hundred milligrams per day, which is about the amount in a teaspoon full of salt. People age fifty-one years and older; people with diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and high blood pressure; and African Americans should try to reduce their sodium even further to fifteen hundred milligrams per day, which is about the amount in three quarters of a teaspoon full of salt. Even if

we reduce the amount of sodium we eat by a quarter teaspoon or five hundred milligrams, it could potentially save thousands of lives.

[Dr. Gaynes] What foods are particularly high in sodium?

[Dr. Cogswell] Well, it's surprising because most of our sodium doesn't come from the salt that we add from the table. About seventy-five percent of the sodium we eat comes from processed and restaurant foods.

[Dr. Gaynes] Do some beverages have high salt levels?

[Dr. Cogswell] Well, some beverages have sodium added to them, but beverages are not an important contributor to the sodium in our diet. The most important contributors are the foods we eat often that are not too high in sodium, like chicken and bread, or foods that we typically think of that are high in salt, like cold cuts or pizza.

[Dr. Gaynes] Can you give us a suggestion for lowering the salt in our diet?

[Dr. Cogswell] There are three easy tips that you can follow. First, check the nutrition labels and compare them for the levels of sodium. You might be surprised to find there's a 200-milligram difference between one brand and another. But the lower-sodium option tastes just as good, so choose that option. Second, when you're eating out at a restaurant, ask that no salt be added to your meal. And finally, when, just when you're eating in general, choose fresh fruits and vegetables, and choose frozen vegetables with no added sauce.

[Dr. Gaynes] Molly, where can listeners get more information about a low-sodium diet?

[Dr. Cogswell] Listeners can get more information from www.cdc.gov/salt .

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Molly. [PAUSE]

I've been talking today with Dr. Molly Cogswell of CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion about the importance of maintaining a low-salt diet.

Remember: Excessive sodium consumption is mostly from salt, and increases blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. To decrease your sodium intake, compare the nutrition labels when you shop; and, when eating out, ask that no salt be added to your meal.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.