



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Watch Your Salt

*Dietary Sodium Intake Compared with Recommended Intake — United States
2005–2008*

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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.

Counting calories is good, but it's not the only thing you need to watch in your diet. A diet high in salt can lead to severe health problems.

Janelle Gunn 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, Janelle.

[Janelle Gunn] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Janelle, what health problems are caused by consuming a diet high in salt?

[Janelle Gunn] The main concern with eating too much sodium is the effect it has on blood pressure. Elevated blood pressure is a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke, the nation's first and third leading cause of death.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there any particular groups that are at higher risk for these health problems?

[Janelle Gunn] Most everyone benefits from lowering their sodium intake, but there are a few groups – African Americans; persons with hypertension, chronic kidney disease, and diabetes; and those 51 and older – who have even greater benefit from lowering sodium.

[Dr. Gaynes] So, what is an acceptable level of salt consumption?

[Janelle Gunn] On average, Americans are consuming about 3300 milligrams of sodium a day. The recommendation is to lower intake to less than 2300 milligrams a day. For the groups that I previously mentioned – African Americans; those with hypertension, chronic kidney disease, or diabetes; or those 51 and older – they benefit from further reducing intake to 1500 milligrams a day.

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

[Janelle Gunn] Good question. I think people think that they're watching their sodium if they don't use the salt shaker, but, in general, most people have eaten more than a day's worth of sodium before they've even picked up the salt shaker while cooking or at the table. Foods that

are high in sodium can be processed and restaurant foods, frozen meals, for example. It's important for people to look at nutrition labels and choose products that are lower in sodium.

[Dr. Gaynes] Can you recommend some foods that are low in sodium?

[Janelle Gunn] Essentially, any fresh fruit or vegetable is low in sodium; also, frozen vegetables that are not in a sauce. Even the canned vegetable aisle has a lot more "no salt added" vegetables available, so those are good, as well. Also, in general, any freshly prepared food can be low in sodium.

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

[Janelle Gunn] Listeners should go to www.cdc.gov/salt.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Janelle. I've been talking today with CDC's Janelle Gunn about the importance of a diet low in sodium.

Remember, consuming too much salt can lead to high blood pressure and increase your risk for heart disease and stroke, two of the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. Ask your health care provider for more information on a low-sodium diet.

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.