



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Pass on the Salt

Excess Dietary Sodium Intake — United States, 2003-2010

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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 pinch of salt can add flavor to any meal. However, excess sodium is a major cause of high blood pressure, which can lead to cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in the U.S.

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 limiting the amount of salt in our diets. Welcome to the show, Molly.

[Dr. Cogswell] Thank you, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Molly, let's start with what is a healthy level of salt consumption?

[Dr. Cogswell] Well, Americans eat too much salt. Almost all of us should consume less than 2300 milligrams of sodium per day, which is about the amount in a teaspoon of salt. But it's not the salt shaker where we get most of our salt. Most of our salt comes from salt added to commercially processed packaged foods and restaurant foods.

[Dr. Gaynes] What types of food are especially high in sodium?

[Dr. Cogswell] Well, the biggest problem is processed foods. So, most people think we get sodium from foods like chips, that taste salty, and we do get a lot of our sodium from those types of foods, but we also get much of our sodium from foods that don't taste salty like bread, for example.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what kinds of food are naturally low in sodium?

[Dr. Cogswell] Fruits are low in sodium and also vegetables without added salt or sauces, but for other foods, for packaged foods, there are ways that you can determine foods that are lower in sodium.

[Dr. Gaynes] What should we look for on food labels to avoid those high sodium products?

[Dr. Cogswell] Well, you can look at the front of the label and, if it says "No Salt Added," or "Low Sodium," which is less than 140 milligrams per serving, you know that's a food that you wanna purchase if you're trying to limit the sodium you eat. You

can also look at the back of the label and on the back of the label is a nutrition facts panel. When you're standing in the supermarket, compare the back of the label for the amount of sodium per serving. For example, in the tomato sauce aisle, you'll find some tomato sauces that have more than 500 milligrams per serving and others, which are low sodium, that have less than 140 milligrams.

[Dr. Gaynes] Molly, are salt substitutes safe to consume?

[Dr. Cogswell] Most salt substitutes contain potassium chloride. And while guidelines encouraged increased intake of potassium, this increase is recommended for healthy people without chronic disease. If you have any health condition or you're taking medications or you have chronic kidney disease, you should check with your doctor before using salt substitutes.

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

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

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Molly Cogswell about the importance of reducing sodium in our diets.

Limit high sodium processed foods, eat more fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables without sauce, read nutrition facts labels and choose the lowest sodium options, and ask for low sodium menu items when eating out.

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.