



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Easy on the Salt

Sodium Intake Among Adults – Selected States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, 2013

Recorded: June 30, 2015; posted: July 2, 2015

[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.

Heart disease and stroke are among the leading causes of death in the U.S., and they have one major risk behavior in common: excessive consumption of sodium.

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

[Dr. Odom] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Erika, why is too much sodium unhealthy?

[Dr. Odom] Well, we know that the more salt you have in your diet, the greater risk you have for having high blood pressure, and high blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke, which are two of the leading causes of death in the United States. We found that, when sodium intake is reduced, for most adults, your blood pressure begins to decrease.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is a healthy amount of sodium in a daily diet?

[Dr. Odom] You know the saying, "Everything in moderation"? The same goes for sodium. National Dietary Guidelines recommend most people eat less than 2300 milligrams of sodium per day, and that's about a teaspoon of salt. However, older people; African Americans; people with hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease, they're at higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease and they should reduce their sodium intake even further to about 1500 milligrams per day.

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

[Dr. Odom] Nearly half of the sodium we eat comes from 10 types of foods, including pizza, cheese, bread, and pre-packaged sauces. Some of the foods we eat may not taste salty but because we eat so much of them, they contribute a lot of sodium to our diets. However, you may not have to get rid of your favorite foods. You can always look for different brands with lower sodium options. Remember, the problem isn't the salt shaker at the dinner table, it's the excess sodium in so many processed and restaurant foods.

[Dr. Gaynes] Erika, are there any healthy salt substitutes?

[Dr. Odom] Most salt substitutes contain potassium chloride. And while guidelines increased intake of potassium through our diets, this increase is recommended for healthy people. You should check with your doctor before using salt substitutes, especially if you have kidney disease or if you're taking medications.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what are some ways to get started on a healthy, low-salt diet?

[Dr. Odom] Three ways to get started include eating a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables without the added sodium. Also, check and compare nutrition labels and choose the "no salt added" or "low sodium" options, which means less than 140 milligrams per serving. That's an important tip, not just for cereals or frozen food dinners you might buy, but also, check labels for items used to prepare meals, like canned tomatoes or mayonnaise. Finally, if you're at a restaurant, you should also ask for a low sodium menu option.

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

[Dr. Odom] Go to cdc.gov and type "salt" into the search bar.

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

Reducing your consumption of sodium can help prevent or control high blood pressure. To keep your heart healthy, talk with your health care provider about eating a healthy, 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.