

Week 5

SALT & SODIUM HERBS & SPICES



WHY SALT & SODIUM MATTER

Sodium is very important. The body uses sodium to regulate blood pressure and blood volume. Sodium is critical for the functioning of the brain, nerves, and muscles. Too much or too little can be fatal.

A high salt or sodium diet can raise blood pressure and lead to a stroke or heart attack. Too much sodium can cause the body to retain fluid, which can stop weight loss and cause kidney and other health problems.

Sodium occurs naturally in most foods. The most common form of sodium is sodium chloride, which is table salt. Even drinking water contains sodium, although amounts may vary depending on the source of the water.

Processed foods usually have sodium added. It is used as a preservative to keep bacteria from growing (particularly in lunch meats, fermented foods, salad dressings, and cheese products). It's also used as a flavor and color enhancer, serves to stabilize foods that are packaged, and to bind ingredients together. The majority of sodium we eat comes from processed food—up to 75%.

It is important to READ FOOD LABELS!

Under the ingredient list, watch for the words “soda”, “sodium”, or the symbol for sodium, “Na”. This will help you avoid or eat less foods with sodium. Other names of sodium added to packaged food:

Monosodium glutamate
Sodium nitrite
Sodium saccharin
Baking soda (Sodium bicarbonate)
Sodium benzoate

WHAT LABELING TERMS MEAN

SODIUM-FREE.....Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
VERY LOW-SODIUM..... 35 mg or less per serving
LOW-SODIUM.....140 mg or less per serving
REDUCED SODIUM.....Usually is reduced by only by 25%
UNSALTED, NO-SALT ADDED, or WITHOUT ADDED SALT.....Made without salt but still contains the sodium that is a natural part of the food itself

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration states that for an individual food to use the “healthy” claim, it must not exceed 480 mg of sodium per referenced amount (not serving). Meal-type products must not exceed 600 mg of sodium per labeled serving size.

Even some over-the-counter medicines have high amounts of sodium. **READ THE LABEL** and ask the pharmacist if there are safe and effective alternatives that contain no or less sodium.

If you have already been given a low-sodium diet by your medical provider, it is very important to stick to it. Even if you are healthy, too much sodium can cause problems. Most Americans who never use a salt shaker at the table get almost 3 times the recommended amount of salt needed every day, primarily through processed and fast foods. Most people get all the sodium or salt they need without ever adding salt to their food.

GREAT SUBSTITUTIONS FOR SALT

For people without medical conditions the national recommendation for sodium is about 2,400 mg daily.

EQUIVALENTS:

1/4 teaspoon of salt	600 mg sodium	1/2 teaspoon of salt	1,200 mg sodium
3/4 teaspoon of salt	1,800 mg sodium	1 teaspoon of salt	2,300 mg sodium
1 teaspoon baking powder	1,000 mg sodium		

SELECT THESE FOODS MORE OFTEN:

- Fresh or frozen fruit
- Fresh, frozen (no sauce), or “low-sodium” or “no-salt added” canned vegetables
- Skinless poultry, lean cuts of meat, fresh or frozen (not breaded) seafood
- Plain rice, noodles, couscous, quinoa, and other grains
- Reduced or low-sodium soups, broth, or bouillon
- Salt-free spices and herbs, like garlic powder, onion powder, basil, oregano, sage, thyme, cilantro, cumin, pepper, mint, rosemary, etc.

USE THESE HIGH SODIUM FOODS INFREQUENTLY: (unless they specifically state no or low-sodium)

- Breaded foods, regardless of how they are cooked
- Processed and American cheeses, buttermilk, butter
- Boxed and flavored mixes of rice, potatoes, macaroni & cheese, instant noodles, couscous
- Canned vegetables or frozen vegetables in sauces
- Soups—instant, canned & jarred, including broth and bouillon
- Seasonings made with salt, such as celery salt, garlic salt, onion salt, and sauces and gravies
- Snack foods—chips, crackers, salted nuts, pork rinds, pretzels, etc.
- Pickled/cured foods—olives, pickles, relish, sauerkraut, herring, etc.
- Condiments—ketchup, soy/steak/teriyaki/chili/Worcestershire/BBQ sauce, salad dressings, mayo, mustard
- Frozen dinners, boxed dinners, pot pies, and pizza
- Smoked, salted, or cured meats, like bacon, ham, hot dogs, any lunch meats, sausage, corned beef, chipped beef, meats that are koshered by salting, salt pork, ham hocks

DURING FOOD PREPARATION: Try to avoid adding any salt and use seasonings to add flavor. Drain and rinse canned foods, like tuna or beans, to remove some of the sodium.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE? SALT— KOSHER, SEA, IODIZED, TABLE

The main difference between table, kosher, and sea salt is their texture. Table salt has fine granules that dissolve quickly. Kosher and sea salts have larger, irregular grains that are crunchy and add a hint of briny flavor when sprinkled on food at the last minute. All are at least 97.5% sodium chloride, a lot of sodium.

Table salt is mined from underground salt deposits and includes a small anti-caking agent to prevent clumping.

Kosher contains no preservatives, comes from seawater or underground sources, and both of these types of salt may lose some flavor when cooked or dissolved.

Iodine helps the important THYROID gland to function properly. Use “iodized” salt, if possible, since most fruit, vegetables, and meats don’t naturally contain iodine. Look for the term “iodized” on the package.

Herbs and Spices

Herbs & spices are used for flavoring and can substitute for fats, oils or salt. Using herbs & spices takes some trial and error, because it depends on your personal taste in flavors and intensity of taste. Experiment to find the ones you like that bring out the flavor in the food. Herbs are easy to grow and have a slightly different taste from dried herbs sold in stores. If using dried herbs from a jar, use less than you would of a fresh herb.

Basic herbs that flavor many different dishes:

Thyme	Basil
Oregano	Parsley
Chives	Rosemary

Experiment! Try herbs and spices in recipes and you may just find your new favorite !

These can be added, and used in stuffing or dressing. Sometimes herbs are tied together and/or placed in cheese cloth to cook with foods. This adds flavor to the food but keeps the actual herbs themselves from being eaten. While garlic, scallions, and onions are actually vegetables, they have a strong taste and smell which can help flavor foods and substitute for salt.

Spices that are sweet in flavor and can substitute for the sweet taste of sugar:

Cinnamon	Nutmeg	Allspice
Cloves	Ginger	

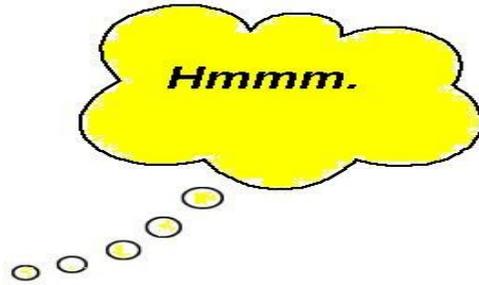
Stevia (a plant with small white flowers and green leaves that are extremely sweet)

Medicinal uses of herbs and spices - a word of caution. Many herbs and spices have been used for centuries to treat various ailments. Be sure that you check with a healthcare provider to see if using a specific spice, herb, or supplement as a “treatment” would cause any problems or interfere with medication you currently take. Some herbs can be toxic, causing allergic reactions or even death. Some examples of typical medicinal use of plants (note that some can hurt as well as help):

- Aloe is often used to treat sunburn but some research shows it can delay healing of open wounds.
- Ginger can help alleviate nausea.
- Cranberry juice can help prevent and improve urinary tract infections; however, only 8 ounces per day is recommended.
- Chamomile’s flowering tops are often brewed for tea and used for sleep, anxiety, upset stomach, gas and diarrhea or for mouth ulcers resulting from cancer treatment; however, many people are allergic to this herb.
- Garlic has been used to improve cholesterol and blood pressure; however, some research has found that it does not help.
 - Garlic can make your blood thinner so be sure to tell your doctor and dentist if you take a garlic supplement.
 - Avoid taking a garlic supplement if you take a blood thinner, such as Coumadin/Warfarin, are on regular aspirin therapy, or if you are on HIV medicines. If you are in doubt about interactions, you should consult your prescribing physician prior to adding any supplement to your diet.
- Soy from food may help improve cholesterol. Soy from supplements is unproven.

Optional:

Reflection and Test your Knowledge questions.



Reflection: After reviewing this week's lesson, think about the topic discussed and how it relates to you

1. Have you made any changes to your salt or sodium intake?

Have you tried to decrease your intake of these items?

2. Do you salt your food before tasting it?

What could you do to change this habit?

3. Have you ever used herbs or spice when cooking to flavor meals?

Are you now thinking about using herbs or spice to flavor meals?

Test your knowledge

1. What are some health problems caused by eating too much salt or sodium?

2. To help lower sodium from canned foods, what can you do?

3. Beside, flavoring foods, what else are herbs and spices used for?

Do you have any specific questions or need advice?

Click the button below to "Ask the Dietitian"

