McHenry County
Department of Health

"Working to prevent disease and promote health and safety for all people of McHenry County since 1966"

What's the Big Deal about Sodium?

It is well known that high sodium intake can increase blood pressure which is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. However, according to the Harvard School of Public Health, studies show that too much sodium can also contribute to osteoporosis and stomach cancer.

How much is too much?

According to the CDC, the average American consumes 3400 mg of sodium a day. Our bodies only need 200 mg sodium daily. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that Americans aged 2 and up reduce their sodium intake to less than 2300 mg a day (about 1 tsp of table salt). People ages 51 and older, those of any age who are African Americans or who have high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic kidney disease should reduce the amount of sodium in their diet to 1,500 mg a day.

What are the top sources of sodium in the diet?

Bread and rolls

Cold cuts and cured meats

Pizza

Poultry

Soups

Sandwiches (such as cheeseburgers)

Cheese

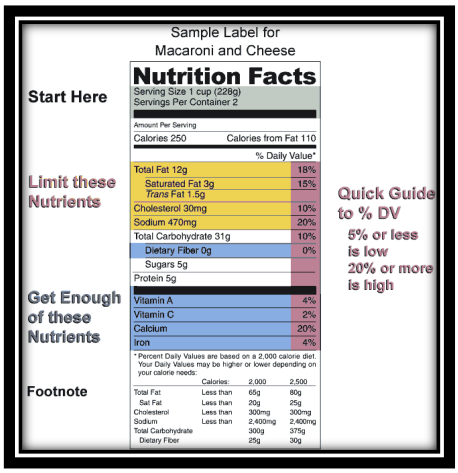
Pasta dishes

Meat dishes

Snacks such as chips, pretzels and popcorn

Reading labels can help

Foods that may seem healthy such as cottage cheese and turkey breast luncheon meat may have high levels of sodium. Some of the ways that sodium is included in foods is surprising. For example, some raw pork or chicken purchased in a store may have been injected with a sodium solution. Pay attention to serving sizes and number of servings eaten throughout the day. One slice of bread may not have a lot of sodium, but if you eat several slices in a day, it can add up.



The Sodium Tracking Challenge

Take the time and make the effort for a day or two to read labels and keep a list track of the amount of sodium that you eat in a day. You may be surprised at the amount of sodium you are actually consuming in one day.

Tips to help cut back on sodium

Eat fresh foods as much as possible. Fresh fruits and vegetables are naturally low in sodium.
Cook more often at home. 25% of all sodium comes from restaurant foods and it can be difficult to know sodium content when eating out. Rinse canned foods to remove some of the sodium. Cut back on salt slowly to let your taste buds adjust. Use spices, herbs, vinegar and lemon juice to flavor foods.

Sources: American Heart Association, Centers for Disease Control, Harvard School of Public Health

Make Healthy Living a Part of Your Life

www.mcdh.info

815-334-4510

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Promoting Better Health
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