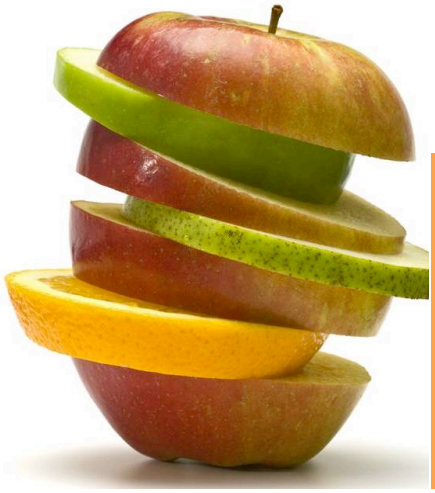

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Food for Thought

A Nutrition Newsletter to Help You Thrive!

Spring 2011

Nutrition information seems to change on a daily basis. It can be hard to figure out what's healthy and what's not. My hope is that this newsletter will help by including new, clear, and compelling information that could make a difference in your health and the health of your family. This first issue is about sodium. I hope you find it useful!

Take care,
Carole Bartolotto, MA, RD

Eat Less Salt

We have known for years that too much sodium is not good for people with high blood pressure, but a recent study in the *British Medical Journal* found that it actually **increases the risk of heart attack and stroke in all people—even those without high blood pressure**!* The study also found that by cutting out just 1,000 milligrams of sodium a day—the amount found in a ½ teaspoon of salt—you can decrease your risk of a heart attack or stroke by 25 percent.

If you have high blood pressure, reducing sodium has been shown to lower blood pressure after only a few weeks. When combined with diet and exercise, it can also lessen the amount of medication you need to take to get your blood pressure under control.

The amount of sodium we consume has skyrocketed over the years. The average American consumes between 3,500 to 5,000 milligrams of sodium per day.

The 2010 U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend *only* 1,500 milligrams per day for African Americans, and for people who have high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, or are over 50. Everyone else can have 2,300 milligrams per day.

A whopping 80 percent of the sodium we get is from restaurant, fast, and processed foods, and not the salt shaker. Sodium is everywhere—in pizza, cheese, apple pie, hot dogs, frozen foods, lemon pepper, and even chocolate pudding.

It's incredibly easy to go over the recommended 1,500 to 2,300 milligrams of sodium. Consuming the following mostly unprocessed foods in a day would give you 1,006 milligrams.

Food	Amount	Sodium Content
Milk	2 cups	215 mg
Chicken	6 ounces	120 mg
Fresh vegetables	2½ cups	100 mg
Fruit	3 pieces	6 mg
Whole-grain bread	3 slices	450 mg
Whole-wheat pasta	2½ cups	20 mg
Trans-fat-free margarine	3 teaspoons	95 mg
Total		**1,006 mg**

Adding ¼ teaspoon of salt to your food adds another 500 milligrams, for a total of over 1,500 milligrams of sodium—and this is without any processed, restaurant, or fast food!

If you also ate any of the popular restaurant and fast foods listed below, your daily intake of sodium would dramatically exceed your goal.

Food	Sodium Content
Costco Food Court's Chicken Cesar Salad	2,680 mg
PF Chang's Double Pan Fried Noodles with Pork	7,900 mg
Panda Express 2 entrée meal with Orange Chicken	2,340 mg
McDonald's Premium Grilled Chicken Classic Sandwich	1,190 mg
El Pollo Loco Pollo Bowl	1,590 mg
In-N-Out Double-Double Burger	1,440 mg

Processed foods can push you over your limit as well. Just 1 tablespoon of soy sauce has 1,000 milligrams, one package of Chicken Top Ramen has 1,800 milligrams, and 1 ounce of American cheese has 300 milligrams of sodium. Even 1 teaspoon of Morton Lite Salt contains 1,160 milligrams of sodium!

What can you do to reduce the amount of sodium you consume?

- Eat more fresh foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, peas, and lentils, and fish, chicken, and meats prepared without salt.
- Cook at home. Make more and bring it to work for lunch the next day.
- Use lemon juice, wine, herbs, and spices instead of salt.
- Eat out less often. Aim for 1 day a week.
- Ask for the sodium content (if available) on your restaurant and fast food choices.
- Eat less processed, packaged, and canned foods. Look at the "Nutrition Facts" section on the labels to see how much sodium you are getting.

So what are you willing to do? Think about what you currently eat. Are there any high-sodium foods that you could easily cut out of your diet? Even a small decrease in sodium can have a big effect on your risk of a heart attack or stroke. Your taste buds will get used to the lower amount of sodium in just three to four weeks.

*Cook, Nancy R. et al. "Long term effects of dietary sodium reduction on cardiovascular disease outcomes," *BMJ,* 2007, 334: 885-888.

What do you want to know?

If you have any topics you would like to read about in the future, please email me at Carole.A.Bartolotto@kp.org