

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### Getting Your Potassium Recently?

If you have not been diagnosed with high blood pressure, count yourself lucky. More and more people have heard the dreaded words from their doctor "Pressure's pretty high, better cut back on the salt." It's no surprise, really, if you look at the stress and pressure most of us live with every day. It's also no surprise if you look at the Nutrition Facts label on your food packages, and notice the Sodium line.

Salt is added to almost all packaged and processed foods. It's good for the food. Salt helps vegetables keep their color and texture better in a can. Salt makes sweet foods taste sweeter and meat taste meatier. Enough salt can be a preservative, preventing bacterial or mold growth. And admit it, most of us just plain like the taste of salt.

Unfortunately, too much salt affects our health. It's not the salt itself, just the sodium part of it. Inside our bodies there's a fine balance between sodium, calcium and potassium. When those three are in balance our kidneys can keep our blood pressure low. But when faced with the sodium overload our normal diets provide, the kidneys can't keep up with the work, and up goes the blood pressure.

That's when the doctor tells us to cut out the salt. For someone used to a typical salty American diet, that order can be torture. Foods don't taste as good. It seems like everything has too many milligrams of sodium. Lists of low sodium foods from the doctor don't make you feel any better.

However, sodium is only part of the problem, so it should only be part of the

solution. Remember that it's the balance between sodium, calcium and potassium that together work on blood pressure. For many people, just increasing the amount of calcium and potassium in their diet, to balance the sodium, is enough to reduce blood pressure. Increasing the potassium seems to lower the risk of kidney stones. It also helps strengthen bones and prevent bone loss as we age.

So, where do you get calcium and potassium? Milk and dairy products are some of the best sources for calcium. Keep it fat-free, but go for the milk, yogurt and cheese. Use the milk to make pudding. Add powdered milk to the pancake mix or use it to make creamy soups. Dairy products also have potassium and some magnesium too.

As for the potassium, you've probably been told to eat lots of bananas. That's partly true, bananas do have potassium. But sweet and white potatoes have more. Tomato paste has lots, beet greens are also high. Cantaloupe and orange juice are also decent sources.

But so are beans. White beans (cannellini) have the most potassium in the bean group, and kidney beans are also very high. Other beans have slightly less but are still good sources. A cup of cooked beans has more potassium than a banana, or a cup of orange juice or milk. So, why not eat beans?

Slow cookers are a great way to cook beans from scratch. They actually cook a little faster if you don't add salt. If you prefer the convenience of canned beans, just dump them in a colander and rinse well before use. That will remove a lot of the sodium that was added when they are canned.

If you don't usually eat a lot of beans, start gradually. Your body will get used to the extra fiber if you add it gradually, and you won't suffer so much intestinal embarrassment. Start with one meal a week, then go on to two, three and four. Your

body will thank you!

Serve this stew with salad and brown bread for a filling meal.

### Bean and Sausage Stew

½ pound low-fat turkey sausage	1 large onion, sliced
1 C sliced celery	2 C peeled, sliced carrots
1 can (15 ½ oz) great northern beans, with liquid	2 C water
1 can (15 ½ oz) red beans, with liquid	

Slice sausage into 1/4 inch thick rounds. Fry until brown. Add onion to sausage and brown. Drain off grease. Combine sausage and onions with rest of ingredients. Cover and simmer for 45 to 60 minutes.

Serves 4.

(Recipe courtesy of the Northharvest Bean Growers Assoc.)

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