

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

May 28, 2009

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**Don't Let the Mini become Maxi**

Ready to bite into that big juicy burger? Whoops, no ketchup! Can't skip the ketchup, or the mustard! Need some mayo too? Pickle relish? Yum, now it's ready, Mmmm good! Did you ever stop to think about what all those little bits of condiments add to your sandwich, besides taste? If you added just 2 tablespoons each of ketchup, mustard, mayo and pickle relish, you could have added as much as 500 calories, and 4264 mg of sodium to your burger! Ouch! Add that to a grilled chicken sandwich and you've just turned a potentially healthy meal into a dietary disaster.

How did those little bits of condiments turn into such a big part of your diet? That much sodium alone is almost 2 day's worth for anyone, more than 2 day's worth for anyone concerned about their blood pressure or over 50 (and who should be concerned about it!) The recommended daily intake for most adults is to try to stick close to 1500 mg of sodium. Young healthy adults can go up to 2400 mg a day.

In this case, most of the sodium came from the pickle relish. We've learned to prefer super-salty flavors, especially when they're mixed with sweet. Pickle relish is a very flavorful combination of sweet and salty. Nice on the taste buds, really hard on the heart.

Ketchup is another combo flavor, sweet and salty. The sweetness is one reason why so many children like it. Some brands are almost tomato jam, they're so sweet. But they have just enough salt to balance the sweet, plus vinegar and a variety of other

spices to add some zing as well.

Added salt provides some of the sodium, but tomatoes themselves have more sodium than many fruits or vegetables. One cup of chopped fresh tomato has 273 mg. A lot of that is in the form of MSG, courtesy of mother nature. That's why tomatoes add flavor to so many other foods - think Italian. There's nothing wrong with fresh ripe tomatoes. But when we concentrate the sodium, add more salt and sugar, and put huge squirts of the red paste on other foods, we can get ourselves in to trouble.

Mayonnaise can also have a lot of salt. Some brands have as much as 500 mg in a single tablespoon! That's one third of the day's recommended amount. But the bigger problem with mayo is the fat. Real mayonnaise is over 90% oil, so 1 tablespoon could have as much as 10 or 11 g of fat. At 9 calories a gram, you can decide if you really need so much mayo on that sandwich or not!

Mustard, hot pepper sauces and horseradish are generally the better nutritional choices. Most have no added sugar and no fat. They do have some added salt, but it is much less than most other condiments. Soy sauce, worcestershire sauce and many Asian sauces, while they add a lot of flavor, also have lots of salt and MSG.

As with most foods on the market these days, there are options. Read labels. Look for "reduced sodium" on the front, read the nutrition facts box on the back. Most condiments, from mayo to soy, now exist in a lower sodium form from one brand or another. For example, while some sweet pickle relish has 1337 mg of sodium per tablespoon, others have as little as 140 mg. Some mayonnaise has 11 g of fat, others have as little as 1.5 g, almost one tenth as much. Those are big differences. If you use a lot of condiments, sauces, spreads and other flavor additives, choosing well can make

a huge difference in your health. If you decide to stick to your regular versions, teach yourself to use less. You can retrain your tastebuds to be perfectly happy with less salt, sugar and fat. And you'll be happier with fewer trips to the doctor too!

Here's a really tasty cucumber salad to serve alongside grilled chicken, fish or burgers. There is enough flavor from the vinegar and ginger that you won't miss the lack of salt. Mirin is a sweet rice wine for cooking. Look for it in the Oriental foods section of the grocery.

Gingered Cucumbers

1 large cucumber

1/4 cup seasoned rice vinegar

1/4 cup mirin

2 tsp grated fresh ginger

1/4 cup sweetener alternative, or packed brown sugar

1/4 cup thinly sliced red onion

Peel cucumber if desired. Slice thinly. In bowl combine vinegar, mirin, sweetener (or sugar) and ginger. Stir in cucumber and onion. Mix well and refrigerate for half an hour. Use a slotted spoon to dip cucumbers out of sauce to serve. Serves 4 - 6.

Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING