

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
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How many of us have been told that we have high blood pressure? A lot, most of us over 45 in fact, have gotten that news. Next question: How many are told, or immediately assume, that means we have to cut back on the salt? Again, that's probably most of us. But there is a lot more to balancing our blood pressure than just avoiding salt. There are a couple of things we need *more* of, not less!

Part of the problem of course is that salt tastes good. It makes food taste good, we like the taste. Probably, eons ago, liking salty things was a life saver. Back when people lived in caves and hunted mammoths salt was hard to find. All that exercise chasing a mammoth could certainly make them sweat to the point that they needed to replace their salt! But nowadays, most of us are eating pounds more salt every year than our bodies are able to handle. The result - thousands of us with high blood pressure.

So, we try to cut back on the salt. It can be done, we really can train our taste buds to like food with less salt. But with salt added to so many foods, it is very, very hard to keep our salt intake under half a teaspoon a day unless we prepare all our own meals from scratch. That is not possible for many families. Many people who really try to reduce their salt intake end up frustrated because, even with all their efforts, their blood pressure still doesn't drop.

The evidence has been growing however that salt is not the whole answer. The

sodium from salt is necessary to keep our cells working. But other minerals are involved in those same jobs inside us. Calcium, the main mineral in milk, was one of the first linked to sodium and blood pressure. As calcium goes up, blood pressure tends to come down. Now potassium, another mineral found in milk and lots of fruits and vegetables, has also been tied to the blood pressure picture. Magnesium is another one that is probably part of the balance too.

Basically, when sodium intake is high, blood pressure goes up. When calcium and potassium are high, blood pressure comes down. The total amounts of these minerals doesn't seem to be as important as the balance among them. So, if you cut the salt down in your diet, that should help bring your blood pressure down a little. But if you lower the salt, and at the same time increase the calcium and potassium, you should get a much larger drop in blood pressure.

The latest research at Tufts University also found that people who ate the most potassium compared to their salt intake had a lot less heart disease and many fewer strokes than people who ate less potassium. It wasn't just the salt in their diets, and it wasn't just lower blood pressure. Less salt is good. But more potassium and calcium are also very good. So drink your milk - low fat please!

Most Americans get less than half the recommended amount of 4700 mg a day of potassium. If you wanted to get that just from bananas you could eat 10 bananas a day. But there are many other good sources too. A cup of milk or yogurt has almost 400 mg of potassium as well as 300 mg of calcium. A medium avocado has about 1200 mg of potassium, a medium papaya (about 3 inches across) has almost 800 mg. A cup of cantaloupe cubes has about 500 mg. A medium baked potato can have as much as

900 mg, and a cup of cooked beet greens has 650 mg. A cup of cooked dried beans or baked beans has about 900 mg too. You see there are lots of ways to get more potassium in your diet.

Don't decide to take potassium supplements. Too much can lower blood pressure too fast. And be sure to let your doctor or pharmacist know if you make sudden drastic changes in your diet. Your medications might need to be adjusted.

Here's a salad that will increase your potassium intake for the day.

Papaya and Avocado Salad with Lime

1 medium papaya	1 medium avocado
1 8-oz can sliced water chestnuts, drained	1 tomato
Juice from 1/2 a lime	1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
1/2 clove garlic, minced	1/3 cup olive oil
1 Tbsp vinegar, Balsamic or cider	salt, pepper to taste

Peel and cut papaya and avocado into 1/2 inch cubes. Dice tomato. Combine fruits and water chestnut in bowl, mix gently. Drizzle with lime juice and chill for 1 hour.

Whisk mustard, garlic, salt and pepper in small bowl. Gradually add the oil and vinegar, whisking constantly until creamy. Stir gently into papaya mixture until fruit is coated.

Serves 8. One serving has 330 mg potassium, the whole salad has 2642 mg.

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