

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Cut the Salt, Save a Life

Actually the recent studies found that if we'd cut back on our salt intakes we could save a whole lot of lives. If we could get ourselves down to the recommended 1,500 mg of sodium a day, about 1.2 million of us would live longer. Even if we ate just 2,300 mg of sodium a day, the amount in a teaspoon of salt, 850,000 lives would be saved. But our daily average here in the US is closer to 3,600 mg. Some fast food meals have more than that in just the sandwich, fries are extra. And some folks routinely hit 6,000 or 7,000 mg a day. Oh, our aching hearts!

Yet if you talk to people, many of them will insist they don't have a salt shaker in the house! So where's the sodium coming from? Some is added when we cook, a lot comes in the sauces and seasonings, and most of it hides in purchased, prepared foods. We've all heard of the salt in canned soup, but there are lots of other offenders. So learn to read labels, and make some gradual changes in your eating patterns.

Start with cooking. There are zillions – well, maybe dozens – of herbs, as well as seasonings that don't contain salt. Mrs. Dash's brand of salt-free seasoning blends has been around for years, but other big name brands are also producing some salt-free mixtures. Check out the spice aisle at your favorite stores. Even lemon juice makes a surprisingly good substitute for salt on fish and vegetables. And read the labels on everything from hot sauce to soy sauce. They can hide huge amounts of sodium!

In the kitchen, gradually reduce the amount of salt you add during cooking too. For example, adding a tablespoon of salt to the water for cooking pasta will add 253 mg of sodium to the cooked pasta. But a teaspoon of salt in the water leaves only 75 mg in the pasta. If you can't find reduced sodium or no-salt-added canned beans, dig out the pasta strainer again. By rinsing the beans well in the colander under running water before adding them to your dish you can remove almost half the sodium. But check the shelves in the grocery too. Almost all canned vegetables and even some

beans are now available with no or little added salt. Many frozen veggies also have no extra salt added. Read the ingredients list to be sure.

Be careful with fresh and frozen seafoods and meats too. If a package of chicken breasts says 'water added', it was probably more than just plain water. Any pre-marinated meats, those tasty seasoned pork loins for example, will have a lot of extra salt added in the marinade. Frozen seafood is often chilled in salt water before it is frozen. Plain, fresh shrimp, even though it lived in salt water, will only have about 100 mg of sodium in a 3 oz serving. Frozen easy-to-peel shrimp can have as much as 550 mg. But that's still better than some fast-food popcorn shrimp with 1,100 mg in 3 oz! Read labels and choose your purchases and restaurants carefully.

One other way that more sodium than we bargain for sneaks into our foods is in sea salt. If you weigh it, sea salt has just as much sodium as table salt. Still, many people think that because sea salt is coarser we'll get less on our plate using it. Cooking Light magazine recently printed their comparison of the amounts of sodium in a quarter teaspoon of 4 different kinds of sea salt plus table and kosher salt. Surprisingly, table salt had the least sodium of all of them, and the sea salts all had more than either table or kosher salt. A fancy name and price don't guarantee a lot of difference in the contents. But your heart and blood pressure will feel the difference if you cut back.

Here's a South Seas Islands way to bake fish. The ketchup will add all the salt you need so don't be tempted to add more. Serve with a rice pilaf and salad to finish the meal. Have fresh local strawberries for dessert!

Baked Fish Guamanian Style

1 Tbsp vegetable oil	3/4 pound fish fillets
1/4 cup ketchup	1/4 cup orange juice
1 Tbsp lemon juice	1 Tbsp finely chopped celery
1 Tbsp finely chopped onion	1 clove garlic, minced

Preheat oven to 350°F. Pat fish fillets dry with paper towel. Heat oil in large skillet and brown fillets on both sides. Arrange in single layer in 9x9 inch baking dish. Combine other ingredients in small bowl, then pour over fish. Bake 45 minutes or until fish flakes easily with a fork. Serves 4-5.

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