

Sodium savvy

By Jennifer Nelly, M.S., R.D., L.D.

Keep the Flavor, Cut Your Blood Pressure

When 58-year-old Susan Hervey came to Cooper Clinic in 2006, she learned she had high blood pressure, with a reading of 142/90 mm Hg (an ideal blood pressure reading is 120/80 mm Hg). As part of her visit, Susan met with one of the clinic's registered dietitians, Cynthanne Duryea, who encouraged her to change her diet and introduced her to the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan, which emphasizes a low-sodium diet.

"I was motivated to eat better because I did not want to go on medication," Susan says. "As a result of my healthy, low-sodium diet, I lowered my blood pressure to 114/65 mm Hg in just two

months." Today, Susan maintains a blood pressure of 96/62 mm Hg without medication.

High blood pressure affects one out of three adults in the U.S. and is a prominent risk factor for heart attacks and strokes. There are several ways to prevent high blood pressure. Here are the basics:

- Reduce your salt/sodium intake.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit alcohol.
- Quit smoking.
- Be physically active.

sodium vs. salt

Americans consume an estimated average of 4,000 mg of sodium a day—which is nearly double

the recommended amount. The Department of Health and Human Services' latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans and other leading health organizations recommend consuming less than 2,300 mg of sodium a day and advise people ages 50 and older to eat less than 1,500 mg a day.

It's important to note that salt and sodium are not the same. Salt is actually a combination of sodium and chloride. A teaspoon of salt contains about 2,300 mg of sodium. The added salt in your diet accounts for a very small amount of your sodium intake. Kosher, sea, and rock salts are not any better.

The majority of sodium intake, 77 percent, comes from processed



10 TIPS TO SKIP SODIUM

- 1 **TAKE THE SALT SHAKER** off the table and don't add salt, seasoning salt, bouillon, broth, garlic salt, or onion salt in cooking.
- 2 **EAT AT HOME** more often and eat foods in their most natural state—fresh fruits and vegetables; and unprocessed, fresh lean meat, poultry, and fish.
- 3 **ENHANCE THE FLAVOR** of foods by using more herbs, spices, garlic, onion, lemon, lime, vinegar, and salt-free seasoning blends.
- 4 **READ FOOD LABELS.**

foods—canned vegetables and meats; boxed and flavored convenience foods; salad dressings and sauces; frozen prepared and convenience foods; seasoning blends; and fast foods and restaurant meals.

taste test

The taste of a food is not the best indicator of a food's sodium content. That's where food labels help out. All packaged foods are required to have a Nutrition Facts label, which makes it much easier to understand the makeup of that food, including the sodium content. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has established these label criteria:

- **SODIUM-FREE**—less than 5 mg per serving
- **VERY LOW SODIUM**—less than or equal to 35 mg per serving
- **LOW-SODIUM**—less than 140 mg per serving
- **LIGHT IN SODIUM**—sodium reduced by at least 50 percent as compared to the regular product
- **REDUCED SODIUM**—sodium reduced by 25 percent compared to the regular product
- **UNSALTED**—no salt added

“One of the most important things I learned was that I had to read the labels,” says Susan. “I was shocked to learn that bread, cottage cheese, diet foods, frozen dinners, prepared foods, and salad dressings were so high in sodium.”

Salt is easy to read on a label, but there may be other nonsalt sources of sodium hidden among the ingredients. Be on the lookout for:

- Baking soda and baking powder
- Sodium alginate
- Sodium nitrate
- Disodium phosphate
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)

The good news is, we are not born liking salt. It's an acquired taste. The same way we learn to like salt, we can learn to “unlike” it as well. Ask Susan. She is much more sensitive to the taste.

“Foods taste much saltier now,” she says. And she doesn't miss it. Well, usually.

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jennifer's oriental honey- glazed salmon

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 tbsp. hoisin sauce
- 1 1/2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tbsp. honey
- 1/2 tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tsp. minced fresh ginger
- 3/4 tsp. prepared hot mustard
- 1/2 tsp. chili paste or 1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 4 salmon fillets (4 oz. each)

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix the hoisin sauce, olive oil, vinegar, cilantro, honey, soy sauce, ginger, mustard, and chili paste (or cayenne pepper) in a shallow glass dish.
2. Add salmon and coat with mixture.
3. Cover and refrigerate 45 minutes or up to six hours.
4. Grill steaks over preheated grill on medium heat for 10 minutes, turning once.
5. Brush several times with extra marinade.

Nutritional analysis per serving (makes four servings): Calories 283, Fat 18 g (Saturated fat 3 g), Protein 23 g, Carbohydrates 7 g, Cholesterol 67 g, Sodium 242 mg

- 5 **LIMIT BOTTLED SAUCES** such as barbecue, soy, teriyaki, steak, chili, catsup, mustard, Worcestershire, and salsa. Tabasco is very low in sodium.
- 6 **SEASON YOUR OWN PASTA** and rice dishes. Avoid boxed convenience foods, which are generally very high in sodium.
- 7 **SUBSTITUTE VINEGAR** (try flavored or balsamic) and oil for processed salad dressings (to keep calories low—drench with vinegar, and drizzle with oil).

- 8 **CHECK RESTAURANT WEB SITES** or sites like www.calorieking.com for nutrition information.
- 9 **WORK WITH A REGISTERED DIETITIAN** to learn low-sodium recipes and substitutions.
- 10 **FOLLOW THE DASH EATING PLAN.** Visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf.

