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Why do doctors ask you to reduce salt intake?

Eating too much salt can contribute to high blood pressure, which is linked to conditions like heart failure and heart attack, kidney problems, fluid retention, stroke and osteoporosis. You might think this should mean you need to cut out salt completely, but salt is actually an important nutrient for the human body. Sodium is an important electrolyte and main component of table salt.

The body needs a small amount of sodium to function, but most people consume too much sodium. Eating too much salt can contribute to high blood pressure, and many other chronic diseases.

High sodium consumption **can raise blood pressure**, and high blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Most of the sodium we consume is in the form of salt, as much as 3,400mg of sodium per day.

How does salt give you high blood pressure?

Sodium attracts water, and a high-sodium diet draws water into the bloodstream, which can increase the volume of blood, putting strain on the heart and consequently increasing your blood pressure.

Recommended adults intake is limited to less than 2,300mg. per day and that would be equivalent to about 1 teaspoon of table salt, and for children under 14 recommended limit is much lower.

If you eat little salt, much less than the days requirement, that too give rise to issues. Normal range in your blood is 135-145 mEq/L. In severe cases, low sodium levels in the body can lead to muscle cramps, nausea, vomiting and dizziness. Eventually, lack of salt can lead to shock, confusion, coma, and death.

Drinking excess quantities of water can cause low sodium in your blood by excreting through your kidneys.

So, low blood sodium called hyponatremia can occur when you have an abnormally low amount of sodium in your blood or when you have too much water in your blood.

Some people do drink lot of water to flush the kidneys, but be aware of this problem.

Hyponatremia is common among older adults because they are likely to take medication, or have a medical condition that can cause the problem. Risk factors include:

Drugs that make you urinate more (diuretics)

Some types of antidepressants

Carbamazepine, an anti-seizure medication

Underactive thyroid or adrenal glands

Decreased function of the kidneys, liver or heart

Certain cancers, including lung cancer

Certain illnesses, such as pneumonia or urinary tract infections, that can cause dehydration

In chronic hyponatremia, sodium levels drop gradually over 48 hours or longer — and symptoms and complications are typically more moderate. In acute hyponatremia, sodium levels drop rapidly — resulting in potentially dangerous effects, such as rapid brain swelling, which can result in a coma and death.

So, too much of sodium intake causes problems, eating too little also just as unhealthy.

A low sodium intake in your diet can lead to insulin resistance and lead to higher blood sugar levels. This can result in type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

One study involving 152 healthy people found that insulin resistance increased after only 7 days on a low sodium diet.

All studies do not agree that there is increased insulin resistance with low salt intake. Some studies show that there is no effect on insulin resistance, or even a decrease in insulin resistance.

But today a low sodium diets have been shown that there is increased insulin resistance, a condition that causes higher blood sugar and insulin levels. This may lead to type 2 diabetes and other serious diseases.

Now let us talk about the issues resulting in taking too much of sodium in the form of salt in your food.

Eating too much of salt for a long time you could get osteoporosis. How do you get it?

You urinate a lot with extra salt intake, and you may lose calcium, and if there is not enough calcium in your blood you will have to take it from somewhere else, and your bones will get depleted with calcium and you will get a higher risk of osteoporosis.

You need to go the bathroom, because eating too much of added salt in your food you need to drink lot of water and you may need to go to the bathroom a lot of times.

This may be due to your eating too much of salt or may be early symptom of type 2 diabetes and you need to see your doctor.

You're craving for unhealthy food with added salt, or you may feel that food tastes too plain, otherwise or has no taste at all.

Most dietary sodium (over 70%) comes from eating packaged and prepared foods, and not from table salt added when you cook your food and eat.

When you don't have the time to cook food at home you go for easy to make meals like pizza, sandwiches, bacon sausages with ham and canned soups. These readymade foods taste so good as they are spiced up by a good amount of salt, without realizing you are eating too much of salt.

For example, two-minute noodles with say chicken flavor, based on the serving size provided on the pack contains over 2 grams of salt, more than half a day's worth of salt.

Instant noodles boiled and eaten provides B vitamins and manganese, they lack fiber, protein and other crucial vitamins and minerals. In addition their MSG, TBHQ a preservative, and high sodium contents may have negative effects on your health, increasing your risk of heart disease, stomach cancers and metabolic syndrome.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about 40% of the sodium consumed comes from the following foods.

Deli meat sandwiches

Pizza

Burritos and tacos

Soups

Savory Snacks (e.g. chips, crackers, popcorn)

Poultry

Pasta mixed dishes

Burgers

Egg dishes and omelets

There are many foods that have high salt content but may not get the feeling that they have too much of salt content.

For example, while some foods that are high in sodium (like pickles and soy sauce) taste salty, there are also many foods (like cereals and pastries) that contain sodium but don't taste salty. Also, some foods that you may eat several times a day (such as breads) can add up to a lot of sodium over the course of a day, even though an individual serving may not be high in sodium

You may lose interest in healthy food. Further too much of salt basically turn off your taste buds, as they get accustomed to large amount of salt in your junk food.

You might be on the way to becoming salt dependent.

When you shop in your supermarkets purchase ready made food by checking on product labels and avoid foods that contain over 0.03 oz of salt per 3.5 oz of food.

You may get muscles cramps due to too much of salt intake or too little intake.

If you get muscle cramps often or every day, and if you are not athletic salt may be the problem.

You may get frequent headaches and feeling of fatigue due to excess salt intake. Overeating excess salt containing food may lead to dehydration, which can cause headaches and fatigue.

You need to eat natural foods rich in potassium to counteract these symptoms

You can flush excess salt in your body through your kidneys by drinking lots of water. Staying hydrated will also help you feel less bloated.

Sri Lankans are fortunate that they eat less salt by adding spices for added flavor than salt in the home cooking process.

Buy fresh meat, poultry, and seafood, rather than processed and cured varieties. Curing is any of various food preservation and flavoring processes of foods such as meat, fish, and vegetables, by the addition of salt, with the aim of drawing moisture out of the food by the process of osmosis.

So, be aware of the salt intake with your food, and limit to contain to within the normal range for good health.

Potassium is important for nerves, muscles, and heart to work efficiently. It also helps to lower blood pressure.

That is why you should eat bananas daily to supply a fair amount of potassium in the body.

Food processing tend to lower the potassium levels in many foods while increasing the sodium content.

It is much better to eat unprocessed foods such as fruit, vegetables and lean meats, eggs, fish and other healthy, everyday foods.

Hope this video talk was useful.

Stay safe and goodbye for now.

Hello Viewer,

My greatest appreciation to those 40,000 odd viewers worldwide-from countries like the UK, the US, Canada, New Zealand, Italy, Spain, including Australia and other countries, for sharing my videos, Health & Views newsletter, and health articles, providing with a view to refresh good health habits for better health, wellbeing, and longevity.

May I wish you all merry Christmas and a very healthy 2022

Please share them with more friends and constructive comments are most welcome.

Thank you.