



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Living a Less Salty Life

Adults for Whom Lower Sodium Recommendation was Applicable — United States, 1999–2006

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. A diet high in sodium, or salt, can raise blood pressure. A CDC study found that over a recent 30-year period, the average daily salt intake among U.S. adults increased by more than 50 percent.

Dr. Darwin Labarthe is a physician and the Director of CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. He's joining us today to discuss the importance of lowering your salt intake. Welcome to the show, Darwin.

[Dr. Labarthe] Thank you, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Darwin, why has salt consumption increased so dramatically among U.S. adults in recent years?

[Dr. Labarthe] Two main factors, Bob; first, we're eating more than we did 30 years ago. And because food is salt, that causes an increase in our salt intake. In addition, many saltier products are on the market now and they are priced generally cheaper than foods that are lower in salt.

[Dr. Gaynes] How many U.S. adults have high blood pressure?

[Dr. Labarthe] More than 70 million adults in this country have high blood pressure, or hypertension. Another category of concern is those considered with prehypertension. That's the next lower level of blood pressure from which people tend to move up to levels of blood pressure that are hypertensive and require treatment.

[Dr. Gaynes] Does a high salt intake directly cause heart disease and high blood pressure?

[Dr. Labarthe] Yes it does. Long term studies have shown that the level of salt intake predicts the occurrence of heart attacks and strokes and other cardiovascular complications.

[Dr. Gaynes] What kinds of foods have particularly high salt content?

[Dr. Labarthe] Well, it's very clear that chips or other foods that taste salty or where salt is visible tend to be very high salt content foods. For people who want to know the salt content of foods they may buy in the market place, nutrition labels give some information about the salt content and that's important and helpful information. For most people, the salt intake should be

lower than those labels suggest, but avoidance of high salt foods, such as preserved meats, sausages, bacon, for example, or certain dairy products, cheeses or cottage cheese that may be unsuspectedly high in their salt intake can be very helpful to reduce overall salt consumption. In addition, restaurant and fast food items may be very high in salt content, such as crispy chicken salad which may have all the salt that you need or should take for a single day in just one serving.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what is considered a healthy level of salt consumption?

[Dr. Labarthe] Generally speaking, in our food supply, the less salt, the better. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, issued in 2005, recommended that, for most Americans, 1500 milligrams of sodium, that means about two-thirds of a teaspoon of salt, is the upper limit of what we should aim for.

[Dr. Gaynes] So what are some strategies that would help decrease salt intake?

[Dr. Labarthe] Well, back to the point made earlier, Bob, that food is salt. Eating a little less food, trimming serving sizes, is one good approach that most of us could take. Second, eating a little less of those foods that, together, contribute a lot to our salt intake. There are foods that don't seem salty in themselves, but because we eat them very often and commonly, contribute a lot to the salt in our diet. Breads and cereals is an example or preserved meats. Limiting the intake of those would be very helpful to reduce salt intake. And last, if there's something that looks or tastes salty, you know that it is salty. Avoiding those foods, choosing to have something else instead, are very good ways to limit the salt intake, overall.

[Dr. Gaynes] Darwin, where can listeners get more information about a low-sodium diet?

[Dr. Labarthe] Links to that information are available at our website: www.cdc.gov/dhdsp, that's for "Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention," - "dhdsp."

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks Darwin. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Darwin Labarthe about lowering your salt intake, an important way of reducing your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. So check the sodium content of those foods you buy.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.