



Dear EAT RIGHT MONTANA Friend:

Welcome to number ten in **EAT RIGHT MONTANA's Real Guidelines for Real People** series. This month we focus on the **sodium** guideline: **Choose and prepare foods with less salt.**

When it comes to helping Americans shake their salt habit, here are the critical facts to remember (and sites where you can read all about them):

- **Reductions in sodium intake and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) both lower blood pressure significantly.** The second DASH study (DASH-Sodium) clearly showed that the best plan is a low-fat, high-phytonutrient, dairy-rich diet combined with a low sodium intake. <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/abstract/344/1/3>
- **Americans consume far more salt and sodium than their bodies need.** Currently Americans get about 73% of their sodium from processed foods and restaurant meals, 12% from sodium naturally occurring in foods, and only 15% from salt added while cooking or from a saltshaker at the table. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/now/html/Dean.html>
- **Learning how to choose and prepare foods with less salt requires several different skills.** To make this guideline a reality, many Americans will need new skills in shopping, reading food labels, ordering restaurant meals, menu planning, and cooking with herbs, spices and other seasonings. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/sodium/sodium.htm>
- **When Americans see 'low-sodium,' they think 'no-taste.'** Since taste is the number one factor in making food choices, consumers need help with cooking techniques designed to minimize sodium and maximize flavor. <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/schoolmeals/Recipes/chefindex.html>

As always, we welcome your suggestions and comments.

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Salt, Sodium and Your Health

Did you know that ...

... salt has played an important role in economics and politics for thousands of years? The English word 'salary' comes from the ancient Latin term 'salarium argentum.' Roman soldiers were initially paid with a handful of salt every day – and later given money to buy their own salt.

... one teaspoon of salt contains about 2,300 milligrams of sodium? This is close to the recommended intake of sodium for healthy adults: 2,400 milligrams per day – the Daily Value listed on Nutrition Facts panel.

... medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, contain sodium? If you are concerned about sodium, it's important to talk to your health care provider or a pharmacist about all your medications, especially antacids, alkalizers, headache remedies, laxatives, and sedatives.

... sea salt is no better for your blood pressure than regular salt? The sodium content of sea salt is comparable to ordinary table salt, and it has no known health advantages. Like all salts, it can be enjoyed sensibly.

... nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the average Americans' sodium intake comes from processed and prepared foods? Only 15 percent of our sodium intake comes from salt added at the stove or with a saltshaker at the table. The remaining 12 percent is found naturally occurring in food.

... deficiencies of sodium are extremely rare? Dangerously low sodium levels can develop in people with kidney disease, in cases of prolonged vomiting and diarrhea, and during long athletic events like marathons runs (especially in hot, humid weather).

... some sodium is essential for good health? Along with other electrolytes like chloride and potassium, sodium helps to maintain fluid balance in body cells, transmit nerve impulses, and relax muscles normally.

From: **The American Dietetic Association's Complete Food and Nutrition Guide**,
by Roberta Larson Dyuff, MS, RD, CFCS (in bookstores and online)



Real Guidelines for Real People: Straight shake on salt

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Healthy Families 2001: Making sensible sodium choices (10th in a series of 12)

Many Americans eat more sodium and salt (sodium chloride) than their bodies need. Nutrition researchers know it. Health experts know it. Food manufacturers know it. You probably know it, too.

“Scientists have known for years that high intakes of sodium are related to high blood pressure in about 25 percent of the population,” says Crystelle Fogle, MS, RD, registered dietitian with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. “Recently, the DASH–Sodium research (the second Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension study) confirmed that reducing sodium intake can lower blood pressure readings. The more that the subjects reduced their sodium, the lower their blood pressure.”

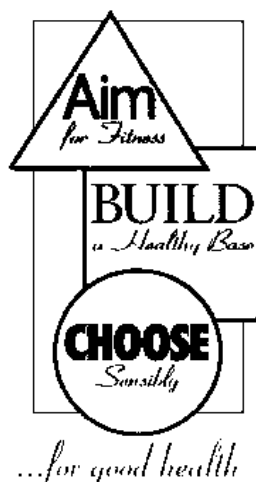
Although the benefits are clear, people are reluctant to cut back on sodium. The problem is that Americans equate less salt with less taste. According to Fogle and other nutrition experts, this is a myth.

With simple changes in how you shop and cook, you can minimize sodium and maximize flavor. Fogle suggests changes like eating more fresh, flavorful foods; reading food package labels; cooking with herbs and spices; and rinsing canned vegetables and beans. Just rinsing canned foods in cold running water can cut their sodium content by up to 40 percent.

Eat Right Montana, a statewide coalition promoting healthful eating and active lifestyles, urges all Montanans to make sensible sodium choices. When it comes to salt and sodium, the nutrition goal is to cut back, not to be sodium-free. Since salt is an acquired taste, the most successful strategy is to cut back gradually – replacing salt with zesty flavor ingredients like garlic, lemon, basil and chili powder.

“Not all high-sodium foods taste salty,” notes Fogle. “That’s why reading food labels is so important. Check out the labels on your usual brands and then look for a lower sodium alternative.”

ATTACHED: *"Making Sensible Sodium Choices"* and *"Easy Ways to Add Flavor"*



Real Guidelines for Real People: Making Sensible Sodium Choices

If you have high-blood pressure, it's time to shake your salt habit. Cutting back on salt and other sources of sodium can lower your blood pressure and reduce your need for expensive medications. Even if your blood pressure is normal now, cutting back on sodium is a good way to fight heart disease, stroke and osteoporosis.

Salt, technically known as sodium chloride, is just one form of sodium in foods. Many other sodium compounds are added during processing and manufacturing. This is why nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of our sodium intake today comes from processed and prepared foods.

Fortunately, there's no need to give up good taste in order to enjoy good health. By gradually making a few changes in food choices and cooking techniques, you can shake your salt habit – and still enjoy great tasting meals and snack. Here's how:

Choose and prepare foods with less salt.

1. Choose more whole foods and fewer processed foods.

✓ In the US, the number one source of sodium is processed foods. By eating more fresh, whole and minimally processed foods, you can easily reduce your intake of sodium – and get more nutrients at the same time!

2. Choose more fresh fruits and vegetables.

✓ Fresh fruits and veggies are a nutrient bonanza – usually low in sodium, fat-free and packed with disease-fighting phytonutrients. Research shows that eating plenty of produce can also help lower blood pressure levels.

3. Choose to read food labels carefully.

✓ The Nutrition Facts panel has the info you need to make savvy sodium choices. For healthy adults, the goal is no more than 2,400 milligrams sodium per day. If you have high blood pressure, aim for 1,500 or less.

4. Choose more foods with no added salt.

✓ At restaurants, you can reduce your sodium intake by requesting that your food be prepared with "no added salt." Taste your food carefully. If you need a bit of salty flavor, add a small shake or two and taste again.

5. Choose more low-sodium foods.

✓ Food manufacturers and grocery stores respond to consumer demand. Buy more low-sodium version of foods, like peanut butter and soups – and ask your supermarket manager to stock the new tasty options.

6. Choose to rinse canned vegetables and beans.

- ✓ The price is often right on canned foods – and they're great to have on hand for quick meals. To reduce the sodium content by up to 40 percent, pour into a colander (or large sieve) and rinse under cold running water.

7. Choose to cook with more herbs and spices.

- ✓ Learning to cook with more seasonings is a delicious way to minimize sodium and maximize flavor. You can use a seasoning blend (like Mrs. Dash) – or get creative with individual herbs and spices.

8. Choose to go light with condiments.

- ✓ Many all-American condiments, like catsup, mustard and pickles, can be high in sodium. Use smaller amounts of the regular types – or check out the taste of the lower sodium varieties, like reduced-sodium soy sauce.

9. Choose to add salt at the table, not at the stove.

- ✓ Studies show that people tend to add less salt at the table than at the stove. Since salt loses its flavor during long cooking times, adding it at the table also helps you get more flavor from smaller amounts.

10. Choose a saltshaker with smaller holes.

- ✓ Many people salt "by habit" – they shake a couple of times and dig into their food. By using a saltshaker with fewer holes or smaller openings, you can cut back on salt intake without trying to change behaviors.

For more tips on making sensible sodium and salt choices:

- **National High Blood Pressure Education Program**

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/h_eating/h_eating.htm

- **DASH Oregon Cookbook**

<http://www.oregondairycouncil.org/dash/index.html>

- **USDA Consumer Corner - All About Food**

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/consumersite/allaboutfood.htm>

**Celebrating
Healthy Families
2001**



Easy Ways to Add Flavor (without salt)

Getting creative with herbs, spices and other seasonings

Do you like adventurous eating experiences? Want to reduce your intake of sodium? Need some easy ways to add flavor to low-fat dishes? Herbs, spices and high-flavor ingredients can do all of this – and more! And, it's easier than you think!

First, a couple of definitions: **HERBS**, which grow in temperate climates, are the fragrant leaves of plants – like parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme, basil and oregano. **SPICES** grow in tropical areas and come from the bark, buds, fruit, roots, seeds, and stems of plants. Allspice, cinnamon, cloves, ginger and nutmeg are examples of spices.

Get experimental.

Buy one new herb or spice each month. In a short time, you'll own an impressive array of flavorful new ingredients. Read the labels for easy ideas on the best foods to use with each new flavoring.

Get fresh.

Many kitchen herbs can easily be grown in a pot on your windowsill or even in a small garden plot. Buy a plant or two from a local greenhouse or start from seed – then use a few leaves at a time.

Get zesty.

Lemons and limes add zest without any calories or sodium. Use fresh squeezed lemon or lime – or just a bit of the peel. Bottled juice also works when the fresh fruit is not available or is too expensive.

Get fruity.

Fruit (fresh, frozen and dried) makes a tasty addition to main dishes or a quick flavor enhancer on the side. Apples and peaches go well with chicken. Raisins and bananas add a Caribbean flavor.

Get ethnic.

Exploring cuisines from other countries is a great way to discover new flavors. Look for recipes in magazines or on the Internet. Ask your friends to share one of their family's traditional recipes.

Get soaked.

Marinades add flavor without fat – especially to leaner cuts of meat, like those from the round and the loin. Mix herbs and spices into fruit juice, wine, vinegar or low-sodium soy sauce.

Get rubbing.

Mixtures of herbs, spices and other items, like chopped onion or garlic, can be rubbed in meat, poultry and fish before grilling or baking. The flavors diffuse into the meat as it cooks.

Get cooking.

Anyone can learn the joy of cooking with new foods, new recipes and new flavors. Most cookbooks have a section on herbs and spices. Grab a book off the shelf and start experimenting – today!!



**Celebrating
Healthy Families
2001**

Healthy Families 2001:

Real Guidelines for Real People

January 2001

- **The New Dietary Guidelines: What's in them for you?**

February 2001

- **Aim for a Healthy Weight: Getting real about weight management**

March 2001

- **Be Physically Active Each Day: Spring into fun and fitness**

April 2001

- **Let the Pyramid Guide Your Food Choices: Build a tasty eating style**

May 2001

- **Choose a Variety of Grains: Great grains for life**

June 2001

- **Choose a Variety of Fruits and Vegetables: 5 A Day and beyond**

July 2001

- **Keep Food Safe to Eat: Putting safety first**

August 2001

- **Making Sensible Fat Choices: Straight facts on fat**

September 2001

- **Making Sensible Sugar Choices: Straight scoop on sugar**

October 2001

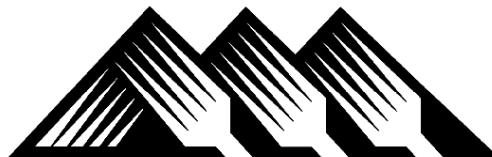
- **Making Sensible Sodium Choices: Straight shake on salt**

November 2001

- **Making Sensible Beverage Choices: A toast to your health**

December 2001

- **Year-Round Health: Real guidelines for real health**



EAT RIGHT MONTANA

A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles