



NACS Employee Wellness E-News April 2014

LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST

DO YOU KNOW ?

Salt, Blood Pressure & Your Health

Salt is essential to our body's fluids. The chemical name for dietary salt, or table salt, is sodium chloride. Since 90% of sodium we ingest is from salt, it's difficult to separate the effects of salt and sodium in many studies. However, it's the sodium part most doctors focus on.

The best known effect of sodium on health is the relationship between sodium and blood pressure. Dozens of studies, in both animals and people, have shown that higher salt intake raises blood pressure. Reducing salt intake, on the other hand, lowers blood pressure.

What You Need to Know About Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of arteries as the heart pumps blood out. When this pressure rises – a condition called high blood pressure, or hypertension – it can damage the body in many ways over time. High blood pressure can be linked to heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and other health problems.

There are 2 blood pressure numbers, and they're usually written with one above or before the other. Systolic, the first, is the pressure when the heart beats, pumping blood through the arteries.

Diastolic is the pressure when the heart is at rest between beats. The numbers 120/80 mmHG are the ones you should aim to keep your blood pressure below.

Researchers do know that not everyone is equally sensitive to salt. Certain groups of people see greater reductions in blood pressure when they lower their salt intake.

Daily Recommendations for Sodium

It's recommend that people consume less than 2,400 milligrams of sodium a day – that's about 6 grams of salt, or about one teaspoon. People with high blood pressure should shoot for 1,500 milligrams or less – about 3.7 grams of salt. Right now the average man in the United States takes in over 10 grams of salt per day and the average women over 7.

One study explored the effects of a modest reduction in salt intake in the United States. The researchers found that reducing salt intake by 3 grams per day could cut the number of new cases of heart disease each year by as many as 120,000, stroke by 66,000 and heart attack by nearly 100,000. It could prevent up to 92,000 deaths a year.

Do you know what to eat after a workout? What you eat after a workout matters. [Click here for a few post workout foods.](#)



NACS Health & Wellness Center

The NACS Health & Wellness Center, provided by Parkview Health, was created to offer employees and dependents covered by the NACS health benefit plan an onsite center for well visits, treatment of minor injuries and illnesses, lab services, limited generic medications and provide ongoing wellness coaching.

The NACS Health & Wellness Center is staffed by physicians from Parkview Physicians Group and a Parkview Wellness Coach offering personalized services to keep you healthy. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Daily Recommendations for Sodium

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All segments of the population would benefit, with African-Americans having the greatest improvements overall. Women would particularly benefit from reduction in stroke and older adults from decline in heart disease.

The Real Sources of Salt Consumption

The salt we sprinkle on our food actually accounts for less than 10% of our salt consumption. Most of the salt we consume comes from processed foods from stores, restaurants and dining halls. You may already know that fast food, cold cuts and canned foods tend to have a lot of salt.

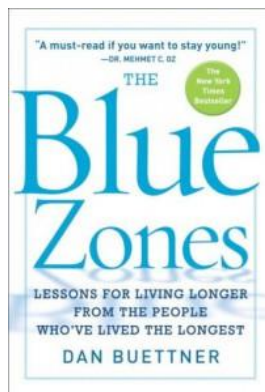
Many people don't realize that a lot of our salt is from breads and cereals. 20% of the salt in the average American's diet comes from grain products, such as breads, cereals, crackers and chips.

In terms of advice, I think the best guidance we have is for people to pay attention to nutrition facts on the labels. The percent daily value is a better guide than the language that's used on food labels like "low-salt". These labels can be confusing because they have very defined technical meanings. Try to select foods with less than 5% of the daily value of salt per serving.

Even small reductions can have an effect on your blood pressure. If you can't find a low-salt alternative to a particular food, it still helps to pick something that's lower than what you're already consuming.

Why not start now? Make small changes at first, and then keep working to gradually lower your family's salt intake.

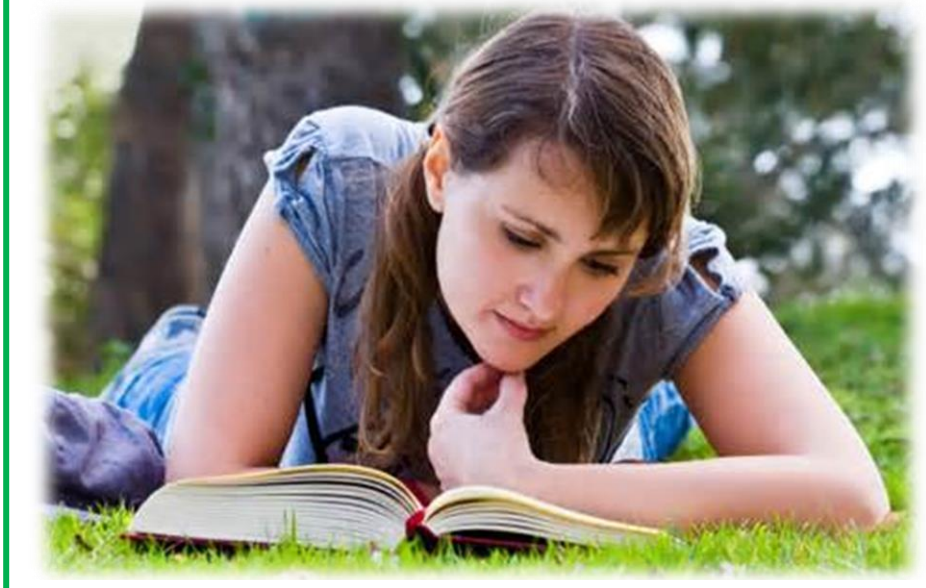
Source: Wellness Council of America



Scheduling "Me" Time

The importance of making time for yourself

Finding private time each day for a healthy activity that helps you unwind is a powerful stress management and productivity enhancement technique. You may feel a little guilty at the thought of scheduling "me" time, but being "self-attentive" in this manner can reap huge rewards for you and others who love and depend on you. Whether you exercise, take a quiet bath, or simply detach to read a favorite book for 15 – 30 minutes, you will rejuvenate yourself, find more creativity, gain motivation, and most importantly, dump that "I'm trapped" feeling. You'll feel good about finding balance, and you'll look forward to your next "me" time appointment.



RECOMMEND WELLNESS READING

"THE BLUE ZONES"

Lessons For Living Longer From The People Who've Lived the Longest

With the right lifestyle, experts say, chances are that you may live up to a decade longer. What's the prescription for success? National Geographic Explorer Dan Buettner has traveled the globe to uncover the best strategies for longevity found in the Blue Zones: places in the world where higher percentages of people enjoy remarkably long, full lives. In this dynamic book he discloses the recipe, blending this unique lifestyle formula with the latest scientific findings to inspire easy, lasting change that may add years to your life.