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It's Too Salty

Next time you reach for the salt, save it for holy water and exorcism

By Kat Avila | Web Published 6.19.2007

When you have high blood pressure, one of the first things the doctor will tell you to cut is excessive salt. The suggested daily allowance for a healthy adult is 1,500 - 2,400 milligrams (mg) based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Many Americans double that, swallowing much more than a teaspoon of salt per day.

Because salt occurs naturally in some foods, and is used as a preservative and to add flavor, it is in just about everything we eat.

Salt is vital to human survival. It is part of every cell in your body. When you sweat or pee, you lose salt. Too much back in and you will end up like the ancient mummies unearthed in Iranian salt mines.

I checked food labels. Here is what I found: 0 mg, 3/4 cup, Trader Joe's fajita vegetable blend (bell peppers, onions)

- 45 mg, 1 piece, Reese's peanut butter cups
- 70 mg, 1 egg
- 80 mg, 1 packet, Quaker Instant Oatmeal, regular flavor
- 130 mg, 1 cup, 2% milkfat, reduced fat milk
- 140 mg, 1 cup, Trader Joe's nonfat vanilla yogurt
- 420 mg, 1 muffin, Zen Bakery blueberry mango cranberry bran
- 590 mg, 1 link, Lightlife meatless fat-free franks
- 890 mg, 1/2 cup, Campbell's soup, beef with vegetables and barley
- 900 mg, 3 four-inch buttermilk pancakes

Pancakes for breakfast and soup for lunch is a total of 1,790 mg. That would blow it for me since with high blood pressure I should not go over 1,500 mg per day.

Does "diet" fly in your world? Not in mine either. A can of Campbell's soup makes 2.5 half-cup servings. I don't know about you, but I can finish an entire can by myself. That's 2,225 mg of salt! (NOTE: Campbell does have a Healthy Request line of soups with substantially less salt.)

Restaurant food and food-to-go are generally a big no-no for a low-sodium diet. Hits your pocketbook, hurts your heart.

Because many of us eat junk food, our taste buds have become desensitized through overstimulation, making us add more salt (or sugar) to our food than we need. Next time you reach for the salt, save it for holy water and exorcisms.

RECOMMENDED READING

"Salt: The Forgotten Killer," by Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D., Center for Science in the Public Interest, at http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/salt_report_with_cover.pdf

CRAFT PROJECT (what to do with the leftover salt)

I learned this in Hawaii. Cut out a small square of fabric. Place a heap of salt* in the center. (*Some people prefer to use coarse grains of sea salt.) Gather up the corners. Wrap a rubber band around the middle so the salt won't fall out. Cover the band with a pretty ribbon. Fluff out the top like a badminton birdie.



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Place the salt ball in your car for protection while driving or next to your bed to keep away evil spirits. If your child gets scared after reading my dad's book Mexican Ghost Tales of the Southwest, show him or her how to make this charm for a more peaceful sleep.

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