



**Florida
Health Care
Plans**



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Shake the Salt Habit

Before you reach for the salt shaker, consider this: according to the Mayo Clinic, the number-one health threat for both men and women is heart disease. And a big part of preventing heart disease is reducing the amount of sodium, or salt, in your diet.

Think fresh. The less processed the food you eat, the better; processed foods (canned soup, frozen entrees and other prepared items) tend to be high in sodium. Instead, load your grocery cart with fruits and vegetables; lean meat, fish and skinless poultry; low-fat or fat free dairy products; and whole grains and pastas.

Taste as you cook. When a recipe calls for salt “to taste,” don’t just automatically dump it in. Use salt sparingly as you taste your food at various cooking stages. If you’re used to that salty taste, give it some time; your palate will soon adjust.

Use herbs. Either fresh or dried, herbs enhance foods’ flavor without sodium. Try basil, oregano, parsley, dill, onion or garlic powder, freshly ground pepper (or cayenne or chili powder). Citrus is another flavor-booster-try grating lemon or lime zest, or squeezing citrus juice on finished dishes.

Cook with stock. A great way to add flavor to pasta, rice, potatoes, and meat dishes is to cook them in or with a lower sodium stock (chicken, beef/meat, seafood, or vegetable), a healthier choice than high-sodium bouillon cubes or canned broth. If you make your own stock, keep extra in the freezer so you always have some on hand.

Or...Load your pantry with prepared stock, being sure to choose a brand that’s lower in sodium and as close to homemade as possible.

Reducing Salt and Sodium When Eating Out

- Ask how foods are prepared. Ask that they be prepared without added salt, MSG, or salt-containing ingredients. Most restaurants are willing to accommodate requests.
- Know the terms that indicate high sodium content: pickled, cured, smoked, soy sauce, broth.
- Move the salt shaker away.
- Limit condiments, such as mustard, ketchup, pickles, and sauces with salt-containing ingredients.
- Choose fruit or vegetables, instead of salty snack foods

What Else Affects Blood Pressure?

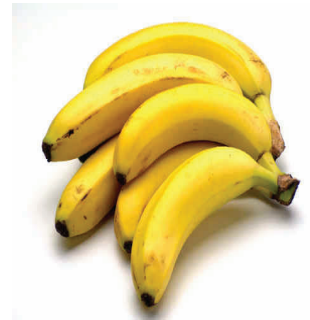
Foods that lower blood pressure must be low in sodium which is a key ingredient responsible for high blood pressure. Sodium increases the volume of fluids in the bloodstream thereby increasing blood pressure. In America, an adult's daily sodium intake is as much as 5300mg mostly due to fast-foods against the daily recommended of 2300mg by the American Heart Association (AHA).

Foods known to lower blood pressure usually contain three key minerals: potassium, magnesium and calcium. These are not the only minerals or components which lower blood pressure, but they are the most common.

- **Potassium** - potassium has the important effect of lessening the effect of sodium (salt). This is in addition to its role of affecting the balance of fluids in the body. The AHA recommends a daily potassium intake of 4700mg. Potassium should be supplied naturally through what you eat instead of supplements. If you are elderly or have kidney disease too much potassium may be harmful. Kidneys in older people or those with kidney disease have difficulty removing potassium from the blood.

Natural supplies are found in the following foods:

- Sweet potatoes
- Potatoes
- Spinach
- Mushrooms
- Peas
- Bananas
- Tomatoes
- Oranges/orange juice
- Fat-free yogurt
- Tuna
- Molasses
- Lima beans



- **Magnesium** - Foods with magnesium are equally important in hypertension therapy, especially with hypertension medications such as diuretics. Diuretics flush out water from the body and in the process also wash out the all important magnesium. Magnesium deficiency is very difficult to diagnose and a deficit can be considered a cardiovascular risk because of its role in ensuring a properly working heart and other systems surrounding the heart.

The role of magnesium in preventing hypertension can not be underestimated. It plays a key role in relaxing blood vessels and lowering blood pressure. Caffeine can cause magnesium loss. This is one of the reasons why there is a negative link between caffeine and high blood pressure.

The following foods that lower blood pressure contain magnesium:

- Beans
- Nuts
- Spinach
- Broccoli
- Okra
- Oysters
- Soy milk
- Whole wheat bread



- **Calcium** - Calcium supplements have been shown in research to reduce high blood pressure by as much as 1.9 points for systolic blood pressure and 1.0 for diastolic blood pressure. It is thought that some component in dairy products exerts a protective effect against high blood pressure. The recommended amount of Calcium per day for adults is between 1,000-1,300mg per day depending on age and pregnancy/lactation. These recommendations are from the Dietary Reference Intake DRI's. As much as calcium is required in the fight against high blood pressure, it must be noted that it is also a magnesium antagonist. Exceeding the recommendations for dairy products or over supplementing for calcium may lower magnesium levels.

The following is a list of foods rich in calcium:

- Plain yogurt
- Eggnog
- White beans
- Almonds
- Peas



- Salmon
- Fruit yogurt
- Milk shakes
- Cheese
- Brussel sprouts

As illustrated in the different foods above, some foods have all three minerals in one. It is important to know that some foods with potassium, magnesium or calcium maybe unsuitable to eat due to the high level of sodium. Patients looking for foods that lower blood pressure, especially in processed or canned form, must be on the look-out for sodium levels by checking the food labels.

Being on a special blood pressure diet does not eliminate the role of anti-hypertensive medications. Your doctor will determine what type of treatment is best suitable for your situation and circumstance.

Checking on your blood pressure levels in response to the different foods is also important. Investing in home blood pressure equipment that can produce accurate and trustworthy blood pressure readings is very importance. In any case, when you see your doctor concerning hypertension they will almost certainly direct that you get regular a **home blood pressure monitoring device**. To help you, we have included in your packet a coupon to assist in the purchase of a home blood pressure monitoring machine. Machines are available at FHCP pharmacies for you to purchase.

Stress. Stress, too, can make blood pressure go up for a while, and is popularly thought to contribute to high blood pressure. But the long-term effects of stress are not clear. Furthermore, stress management techniques alone do not seem to prevent high blood pressure. However, stress management approaches may help you control other unhealthy habits, such as overeating or smoking.

For more information, visit our website at www.fhcp.com. Here you will find other valuable resources. Or you can call us at 386 / 676 – 7100 ext. 7788. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The hearing impaired may call TRS Relay 711.

Source: www.americanheart.org/