



Ninety percent of American Get Too Much Salt – 5 Foods Blamed

The Center for Disease Control reports that the average American gets twice the recommended sodium intake. Five high-sodium foods -- not all of them salty tasting -- are a big reason why 9 in 10 Americans get way too much sodium every day.

New CDC data show that only 9.6% of U.S. adults limit their daily sodium intake to recommended levels. Where's all that sodium coming from? From salt, mostly. But only 10% of it comes from our shakers. An estimated 77% comes from sodium in processed or restaurant foods.

"All food categories contribute to sodium intake. But grains and meat -- the foods we eat most -- contribute the most sodium," Elena V. Kuklina, MD, PhD, senior service fellow at the CDC's division of heart disease and stroke prevention, tells WebMD.

But the CDC report identifies five foods that give Americans most of their salt:

- Yeast breads
- Chicken and mixed chicken dinners
- Pizza
- Pasta dishes
- Cold cuts

The three food groups from which we get the most sodium include some surprises:

- Grains contribute 37% of our daily sodium. These foods include grain-based frozen meals and soups, breads, and pizza (which is mostly salty bread).
- Meats, including poultry and fish, contribute 28% of our daily sodium.
- Vegetables contribute more than 12% of our daily sodium. This seems surprising, but potato chips and french fries are vegetables. And canned vegetables, vegetable soups, and vegetable sauces tend to be loaded with salt.

Basic U.S. dietary guidelines suggest that adults get less than 2,300 milligrams of salt each day, but the basic guidelines apply to fewer than a third of Americans. The rest -- 70% of the population -- are middle aged, elderly, or African-American. This huge majority should get less than 1,500 milligrams of salt per day.

But the average American gets more than twice the recommended daily dose of sodium: 3,466 milligrams of sodium per day. This means we're at risk of dangerously raising our blood pressure. That high blood pressure increases our risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease. The CDC calculates that if everyone followed sodium-intake guidelines there would be as many as 120,000 fewer cases of heart disease and up to 66,000 fewer strokes each year. What can we do? Kuklina says a lot is up to the food industry.

Take control - there's a lot we can do ourselves:

- Eat less processed food.
- Eat more fresh and frozen vegetables.
- Compare labels to choose low-sodium foods (and don't be fooled by deceptive labels).



- When using canned vegetables or beans, rinse the food well with water to remove as much salt as possible.

SOURCES: Daniel J. DeNoon - *WebMD Health News; Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, June 24, 2010; vol 59: pp 746-749. Elena V. Kuklina, MD, PhD, senior service fellow, division for heart disease and stroke prevention, CDC, Atlanta.

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