

[IMAGE]

Cut Back On Salt

By Julie T. Chen, MD

The biggest issue with consuming too much salt is its detrimental impact on high blood pressure and swelling of your extremities such as your ankle and feet, right? Well, did you know that there are other organs affected by the extra salt you eat in your diet as well?

Salt draws water to it and can cause elevation of the pressure inside your blood vessels hence worsening blood pressure. If this happens, your heart has to work harder to pump out blood to supply your body with the necessary nutrients. The longer your heart has to pump against the elevated pressure in your blood vessels, the more likely your heart will wear out and fatigue. Heart failure and heart attacks can occur from your heart having to work overtime.

Another organ that gets affected is your kidney. When there is excess salt in your blood stream, your kidneys have to work harder to get rid of that in your urine and it's been suggested that with the increased salt load to the kidney filtration system, you may be at higher risk for kidney stones and mineral deposits to your kidneys. Beyond the direct effect of the salt, the high blood pressure generated by the salt can cause kidney disease.

Finally, even your bones are affected by the excess salt in your diet. There's evidence that suggests that extra salt in your diet can worsen your risks for osteoporosis. Since the excess salt in your blood stream needs to be filtered in your kidney and removed, there are other minerals that the salt may bind to or cause a shift in the filtration system such that higher levels of other minerals are also lost in urine because of the excess salt. One of those minerals is calcium. Therefore, if that's the case, it's been suggested that bone health is compromised with a diet that is high in salt.

salt - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark So you must be asking yourself about where you are getting all this salt from. Unfortunately, there are usually a lot of salt in foods we eat in restaurants as well as in frozen foods. Even if you cook at home, be wary of the pre-made sauces you buy, they'll probably be pretty high in their sodium content as well. So, how do you prevent having excess salt in your diet?

The simplest way is to make sure you read labels and be vocal in restaurants. Ask your waiter/waitress if they can keep the sauces and salt to a minimum if you are eating out. If you are cooking at home, try to use simple ingredients like herbs or olive oil so you know exactly how much salt you are putting into your food. If you must use pre-made sauces or eat pre-made food options, make sure to read the label to see if sodium content is low enough.

What I usually tell my patients is that they should aim for about 1500-2000 milligrams of sodium per day at most. By paying attention to what you are eating, I believe that just that simple act will start to help you towards the road of eating a more balanced low sodium diet.

Dr. Julie T. Chen is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit www.makinghealthyez.com.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=1970&no_paginate=true&no_b=true