

[IMAGE]

Reduce Sodium Intake, Reduce Heart Disease

Almost everything we eat contains at least a little sodium, although many foods, especially the processed variety, contain way too much. Our bodies only need about 500 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day; although current dietary recommendations allow for 2,000 4,000 mg (1-2 teaspoons of salt), statistics show that the average adult consumes almost double that amount on a daily basis.

Limiting your sodium intake can reduce your risk of developing high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease, especially if you're overweight, according to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Researchers estimated dietary sodium intake in 2,688 overweight subjects and 6,797 nonoverweight subjects, then assessed the incidence of and/or death from cardiovascular disease over 19 years of follow-up.

Results: Among overweight participants, a relatively small increase in sodium intake was associated with substantial increases in disease risk: a 32% higher risk of stroke; a 44% higher risk of heart disease; a 61% higher risk of death from heart disease; and a 39% higher risk of death from all causes. Dietary sodium intake was not significantly associated with cardiovascular disease risk in nonoverweight participants.

If you already have high blood pressure or a developing heart condition, restricting your sodium intake is even more imperative. Your doctor can give you more information on sodium and provide nutritional guidelines suitable to your specific needs.

Reference:

He J, Ogden LG, Vupputuri S, et al. Dietary sodium intake and subsequent risk of cardiovascular disease in overweight adults. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Dec. 1, 1999: Vol. 282, No. 21, pp2027-34.

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