

[IMAGE]

Take Salt with a Grain of This

Americans love their salty foods. From potato chips and popcorn to canned and frozen foods, the flavor and long shelf life of high-sodium foods makes them popular items. At the same time, more Americans are dying from congestive heart failure (CHF); roughly 5 million people in the U.S. experience CHF annually.

The authors of this study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* compared CHF cases in approximately 5,000 normal-weight and 5,000 overweight individuals. Up until 21 years after an initial diet questionnaire, CHF cases were recorded and classified based on sodium intake.

Overweight individuals in the highest sodium intake category (approximately 4,300 milligrams/day or more) were 43% more likely to suffer CHF than overweight individuals with the lowest intakes (approx. 1,900 mg/day or less). Sodium intake was not linked to CHF in normal-weight persons, however.

An intake of less than 2,400 mg/day of sodium is recommended by several government health agencies, because high sodium intake can also increase hypertension and cardiovascular disease risks. Try to eat fresh foods and prepare your own meals, as prepackaged foods are often loaded with sodium. Start reading labels on pre-prepared meals, too - you might be shocked at how much sodium you're already eating!

Reference:

He J, Ogden LG, Bazzano LA, et al. Dietary sodium intake and incidence of congestive heart failure in overweight U.S. men and women. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 2002;162(14), pp. 1619-1624.

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