



## Watch out for sodium when eating out

**My blood pressure is just starting to creep up, so I want to cut back on sodium. I eat out a lot, and I understand restaurant meals can contain a lot of salt. How can I reduce sodium while still eating out?**

It's true — a lot of the food served at restaurants contains incredible amounts of salt. Standard guidelines recommend that people limit sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams a day — the amount in one teaspoon of salt. If you already have high blood pressure, the recommendation is even less — 1,500 milligrams a day. But in May 2009, the Center for Science in the Public Interest released a study of 17 chain restaurants revealing that 85 of the 102 meals they studied contained more than a day's worth of sodium. Some meals contained more than 6,000 milligrams of sodium.

Whether you eat out a lot or not, you're likely consuming more sodium than your body would ever need. In March 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reported that Americans on average consume 3,436 milligrams a day, even though 69 percent of them should be following the 1,500-milligram guideline. The CDC said most of the sodium consumed by Americans comes from packaged, processed and restaurant foods.

A diet with moderate sodium intake and rich in potassium and

calcium is recommended to control blood pressure in most people. High blood pressure is a major contributor to the risk of heart disease and stroke.

To reduce sodium intake while dining out, the CDC recommends that people choose fresh fruits and vegetables as often as possible and ask that their food be prepared without salt. In addition, the Mayo Clinic offers these hints at its Web site, <http://www.mayoclinic.com> (search for "Avoid hidden dangers"):

- When looking at the menu, watch out for terms such as "pickled," "cured," "smoked," "soy sauce" or "broth" — all indicate a dish may be high in sodium.
- Ask that the salt shaker on the table be removed, or at least move it so it's not within easy reach.
- Go easy on condiments, such as mustard, ketchup, pickles and sauces, which are often high in sodium.

For even more information on sodium, see the American Heart Association's Web site at <http://www.americanheart.org/>. Search for "Shake the Salt Habit." That page contains information on sodium compounds to avoid and a link to information on the "DASH" ("Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension") eating plan, sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services as a way to reduce blood pressure.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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