



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Be good to your heart: Eat less salt

*By Lt. Col. Karen E. Hawkins,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Do something good for your heart: Eat less salt. This involves more than just giving up the salt shaker to help reduce your sodium intake. A very small amount of the sodium you eat daily actually comes from the salt you add to food. Yet, more than 70 percent of the sodium in the average American’s diet is found in the processed and restaurant foods we buy, prepare and eat every day.

Sodium guidelines

Current dietary guidelines recommend that adults in general should consume no more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. However, if you are in the following population groups, you should consume no more than 1,500 mg per day:

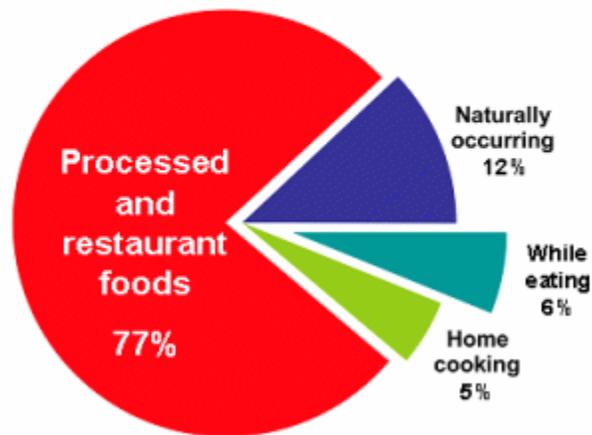
- You are 40 years of age or older.
- You are African American.
- You have high blood pressure.

A new Centers for Disease Control report shows that two out of three – 69 percent – adults in the United States fall into these three groups that are at especially high risk for health problems from consuming too much sodium. Eating less sodium can help prevent, lower or even control blood pressure.

Hidden sodium

The CDC and others recognize that most of the sodium we eat comes from packaged, processed, store-bought and restaurant foods. Only about 5 percent comes from salt added during cooking and about 6 percent comes from salt being added at the table. You can find out how much sodium you are eating by checking the labels on food products and adding up the sodium milligrams. If at a restaurant, ask for nutritional information facts that include sodium.

Most Sodium Comes from Processed and Restaurant Foods



Source: Mattes, RD, Donnelly, D. Relative contributions of dietary sodium sources. Journal of the American College of Nutrition. 1991 Aug; 10(4):383-393.

Shopping tips at your commissary

Fresh is best when trying to eat less salt or sodium. Shop around the perimeter of the store where you'll find the produce, lean meats and dairy foods, which are naturally low in sodium, and all at significant savings of more than 30 percent.

In the center aisles, look for the many reduced-sodium foods that are available today. These include everything from soups to chips and crackers. All of these foods may be included when trying to reduce your salt intake.

Read the nutrition labels to find out how much sodium per serving is in the food you are buying. Choose the lower-sodium foods, especially soups. When possible, make your own soup to better control the amount of salt you eat.

Buy and use the sodium-free marinades for chicken, beef, pork and seafood. You can also use any marinade left in the bottle to cook vegetables, potatoes or pasta.

When buying and using canned vegetables and beans, rinse them under running water at home. This will remove up to 40 percent of the sodium.

Buy and use herbs and seasoning powders instead of seasoning salts. Create your own mixes with different herbs. When in doubt, use garlic and onion powder to season meat or vegetables.

There is a nationally known eating plan, the DASH diet, that can help lower high blood pressure. DASH, which stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, isn't a weight-loss diet, but rather an eating style to help reduce your risk of serious health complications. It helps lower blood pressure by including nutrients, such as potassium, calcium and magnesium, all of which are associated with lower blood pressure. These key nutrients are boosted by including more fruits, vegetables and low-fat or nonfat dairy in your daily diet. If you are battling high blood pressure, or just want to follow a healthy eating plan, DASH helps lower sodium or salt in your diet.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian's Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on www.twitter.com and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious recipes, check out Kay's Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

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About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,300 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*