



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## Look for less sodium, more potassium in your diet

*By Karen Hawkins,  
DeCA dietitian*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – Most of us know that eating too much sodium is not good for us, as doing so may increase the risk for high blood pressure, which can lead to a variety of diseases. Nearly one in three U.S. adults have high blood pressure and almost as many have pre-hypertension or slightly elevated blood pressure. Not sure what your blood pressure is or haven't had it checked in awhile? If so, then it is time to get it checked.

Eating less sodium, as well as making other lifestyle changes, may prevent or delay getting high blood pressure and may help lower elevated blood pressure. These changes include eating more potassium-rich foods, losing excess weight, being more physically active, eating a healthy diet and limiting alcoholic beverages, if you choose to drink them.

### Hidden sodium in food

Sodium is found in many of the processed and prepared foods we eat every day, such as canned vegetables, soups, luncheon meats and frozen meals. Food manufacturers also use sodium-containing compounds to preserve food and improve its taste and texture.

A new report from the Institute of Medicine recommends that sodium content of foods be reduced to help reduce the risk of hypertension and cardiovascular disease. The report urges the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to set maximum sodium levels for different foods so, over time, average consumption would drop by about half a teaspoon. As the government moves

forward in addressing the issue of sodium in food you buy, there are many things you can do to eat less sodium.

### **To kick the sodium habit**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that you get no more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium each day. People with high blood pressure, African-Americans and people who are middle-aged or older should get no more than 1,500 milligrams of sodium each day and should get potassium through foods.

### **Tips for eating less salt:**

- Look for low-sodium products when shopping in the commissary. When you're choosing packaged foods, check the sodium content on the nutrition facts label. Use the percent Daily Value (percent DV) to help limit your sodium intake — 5 percent DV or less is low and 20 percent DV or more is high.
- Compare sodium content for similar foods. This can really make a difference. Use the nutrition facts label to select brands that are lower in sodium.
- Eat more fresh foods and fewer processed foods. Fresh meat is usually lower in sodium than luncheon meat, bacon, hot dogs, sausage and ham. When possible, buy fresh and frozen poultry or meat that hasn't been injected with a sodium-containing solution.

### **Eat more potassium**

Adults should try to consume 4,700 milligrams of potassium each day in foods and beverages. On average, children need 3,000 to 4,500 milligrams of potassium each day, depending on their age.

Foods high in potassium include the following items noted by food serving size and potassium (mg):\*

- Apricots, dried, 10 halves, 407
- Avocados, raw, 1 ounce, 180
- Bananas, raw, 1 cup, 594
- Beets, cooked, 1 cup, 519
- Brussels sprouts, cooked, 1 cup, 504
- Cantaloupe, 1 cup, 494
- Dates, dry, 5 dates, 271

- Figs, dry, 2 figs, 271
- Kiwi fruit, raw, 1 medium, 252
- Lima beans, 1 cup, 955
- Melons, honeydew, 1 cup, 461
- Milk, fat-free or skim, 1 cup, 407
- Nectarines, 1 nectarine, 288
- Orange juice, 1 cup, 496
- Oranges, 1 orange, 237
- Pears, fresh, 1 pear, 208
- Potatoes, baked, with flesh and skin, 1 potato, 1,081
- Prune juice, 1 cup, 707
- Prunes, dried, 1 cup, 828
- Raisins, 1 cup, 1,089
- Spinach, cooked, 1 cup, 839
- Tomato products, canned, sauce, 1 cup, 909
- Winter squash, 1 cup, 896
- Yogurt plain, skim milk, 8 ounces, 579

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](http://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*.

(\*United States Department of Agriculture Nutrient Database for Standard References, Release 15 for Potassium, K (mg) content of selected foods per common measure.)

**-DeCA-**

**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.*