

Module 1, Lesson 3 Handout:

Sodium Recommendations For Heart Health

You may have clients that are watching their sodium intake or asking for food recommendations due to a recent diagnosis. As you know, sodium is the main component in salt, but it's also present in many of the foods we eat every day. The issue with sodium isn't that it's inherently bad for us. It's actually a very important mineral, but we eat way too much of it - most adults eat an average of more than 3,400mg each day.

Let's review sodium intake recommendations and the ways you can work with your clients to reduce their sodium intake and promote cardiovascular health.

A study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that people who ate high-sodium, low-potassium diets had a higher risk of dying from a heart attack or any cause. The people with the highest ratio of sodium to potassium in their diets had double the risk of dying of a heart attack than people with the lowest ratio. They also had a 50% higher risk of death from any cause.

The positive part here is that this is a place you can make a big difference and clients often have a lot of control over. About 70% of the sodium Americans eat comes from processed, prepared foods such as crackers, cheese, and canned foods and restaurant meals. For the healthy person who's consuming mostly whole, real foods, she can feel free to sprinkle on that high quality salt when roasting veggies. This is usually not a concern. But, for the person consuming many packaged, processed foods with high blood pressure it's a huge concern.

Another note to make is that different salts do contain different amounts of minerals. "Fancy" salts like Himalayan salt or Celtic salt will have higher amounts of calcium, potassium, magnesium and iron compared with super processed traditional table salt and have slightly lower amounts of sodium. However, we should still be using a small amount of these salts on our food and the mineral amounts are trace to begin with, so this doesn't make a huge difference in nutrient intake. Most people consume various salts for their different flavor profiles.

Sodium Recommendations

	Child 1-3 years old	Female 4-8 years old	Male 4-8 years old	Female 9-13 years old	Male 9-13 years old	Female 14-18+ years old	Male 14-18+ years old
Sodium, Milligrams (mg) (UL*)	1,500mg	1,900mg	1,900mg	2,200mg	2,200mg	2,300mg	2,300mg

*UL= Tolerable Upper Intake Level

Sodium in the Diet

The average intake of sodium is generally higher for men than women. Most of this sodium is coming from salts added during commercial food processing and preparation. Some ways you can teach your clients to reduce their sodium intake include:

- Paying close attention to the Nutrition Facts label and the ingredients
- Being familiar with products that are labeled as: (but, steering clear *as much as possible* of all packaged, processed foods in the first place - especially frozen and snack foods.)
 - sodium-free (less than 5mg per serving)
 - very low sodium (35mg or less per serving)
 - low-sodium (140mg or less per serving)
 - reduced sodium (at least 25% less sodium per serving than normal product)
 - light in sodium (at least 50% less sodium per serving than normal product)
 - or no salt-added when available
- Using herbs and spices to add flavor and nutritional value to their food (avoiding most packaged condiments, sauces and salad dressings.)
- Preparing their own food

Refer to the Sources of Sodium in the Diet tool in this lesson when working with clients to decrease their intake of sodium.