

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at M3.

## *The Health Benefits of Reducing Sodium in your Diet*

Monitoring your daily sodium intake can have major health benefits – from reducing your risk of a heart attack and stroke, to lowering your blood pressure. And cutting salt from your diet doesn't have to be extremely limiting.

Whether your blood pressure is within the healthy range (120/80 or lower) or not, eating a healthy diet with low salt intake can be very beneficial to your health. (The American Heart Association recommends no more than 1,500 milligrams of sodium per day.) This means maintaining a balance of sodium, calcium, potassium and magnesium in your diet. A good way to reach adequate daily amounts of these minerals is to increase your consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy products and whole grains.

### **Limiting Salt**

Eliminating some of the salt in your diet doesn't have to mean completely changing what you're eating. Here are some easy ways:

*Limit meals out.* Typical restaurant meals are consistently high in sodium. Try cutting your meals out in half – unless you know you can order a low-sodium meal.

*Read the facts.* When buying premade, prepackaged or canned foods, look closely at the nutrition facts and ingredients. Ingredients to avoid due to their high salt content include sodium chloride, monosodium glutamate, sodium bicarbonate, disodium phosphate, sodium nitrate, sodium propionate and sodium sulfite.

*Avoid high salt foods.* Foods that are typically high in salt with more than 400 milligrams of sodium per serving include: canned soups, spaghetti sauce, potato salad, baked beans, macaroni and cheese, pizza, hot dogs, cottage cheese, deli meat and pickled foods. Many brands offer low-salt varieties of these foods that you can find at your grocery store.

*Put away the salt shaker.* Avoid adding salt before and after cooking. Try experimenting with other flavors such as black pepper, garlic, lime or lemon juice, and red wine vinegar.

### **Reducing Your Risks**

Although reducing your sodium intake has many health benefits, the main factors that influence

the risk for developing high blood pressure are as follows:

- Family history of hypertension
- Obesity and excess weight
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Too little potassium, calcium and magnesium consumed
- High stress levels or chronic pain
- Excessive consumption of alcohol

Combine your reduced salt diet with exercise and an overall healthy lifestyle to keep your blood pressure within the healthy range.



## **Did You Know...?**

According to the American Heart Association, Americans consume 3,436 milligrams of sodium on average every day. Approximately 75 percent of this intake comes from processed foods and restaurant meals.