

Too much salt – is it bad?



With the increased availability of a variety of fast foods, processed and refined products in our modern society many people are eating much more salt than what they need without even realising it. Although sodium requirements differ according to age, activity level, climate and the amount that you sweat, the minimum daily amount of sodium that the average healthy adult needs is only 500 mg (this is equivalent to about 1.25g of salt). The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) recommends that not more than one teaspoon (6g) of salt per day should be consumed. Most South Africans have almost doubled this recommended daily allowance.

During World Salt Awareness week (1-7 February), the HSFSA is joining hands with WASH (World Action on Salt and Health) group to help raise awareness about the consequences of consuming too much salt and to urge people to eat less of it! Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure and increase your risk of stroke, heart attack or heart failure. It is also linked with other medical conditions such as kidney disease, osteoporosis (thinning of the bones) and stomach cancer.

Healthy alternatives for flavouring foods

Food tastes better when it is seasoned properly to bring out all the flavours. The problem is that the seasoning of choice is always salt. To help you reduce the amount of salt in your diet, here are a few ideas for healthier flavour enhancers when preparing these foods:

Beef: balsamic vinegar, black pepper, horseradish, mustard, red wine, tomato

Chicken: basil, chives, dill, fennel, garlic, ginger, lemon juice, marjoram, mint, oregano, paprika, parsley, rosemary, tarragon, thyme, white pepper, white wine

Fish: bay leaf, dill, fennel, lemon juice, onion, parsley, tarragon, tomato, white pepper, white wine

Lamb: aniseed, basil, cardamon, cayenne pepper, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, juniper berry, mint, mustard, oregano, redcurrant jelly, rosemary

Ostrich: coriander, onion, pineapple, tomato chilli

Pork: apple, cider, coriander, ginger, lime, orange, sage, thyme,

Green vegetables: black pepper, lemon juice, mint, toasted almonds

Potatoes: black pepper, nutmeg, parsley, paprika, (low fat or fat free) yoghurt

Salad vegetables: basil, black pepper, garlic, lemon juice, oregano, (low fat or fat free) yoghurt

Rice: coriander, onion, red or green peppers, saffron

Pasta: basil, black pepper, garlic, oregano

Remember, when using fresh herbs such as coriander, oregano, sage and thyme – add them towards the end of the cooking process on mild heat. Otherwise they tend to burn and may leave a bitter after taste.

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