Nutritious Bites

Reduce Sodium (But Keep the Flavor)

By Whitney Bignell, PhD, RDN, LD

Your doctor told you to cut back on your salt. You’ve tried low-sodium soup, reduced sodium crackers, and no-salt added ketchup – and you’re convinced that cutting back on salt means flavorless food.

May is National High Blood Pressure Education month, and you’ll likely see a lot of pamphlets in waiting rooms with information to help you decrease your blood pressure – including decreasing sodium. If you see a pamphlet, pick it up. Read it carefully. Look up any resources listed in the reference section. Even if you think you’ve tried everything to lower your blood pressure, there may be a tip or trick that will help you.

In the meantime, here are a few ideas to help you decrease the amount of sodium in your diet – especially looking out for hidden sources of salt.

Reducing Your Sodium

• Most healthy people should aim for less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day.
• Eat less highly processed chicken (especially chicken nuggets), with about 600 mg of sodium per 3-ounce serving).
• Sandwiches can hide a lot of sodium (bread, cured meats, and cheese may have more than 1500 mg in one serving).
• Drain and rinse canned vegetables.
• Give your taste buds time to adjust to less salt.
• Add fresh or dried spices and herbs to dishes (i.e., lemon, ginger, basil, parsley, or pepper)
• Be careful with salt substitutes – they can be too high in potassium for people with kidney disease.

Recipe of the Month
Black Bean and Corn Salsa
Serves 6-8
This quick party favorite shows that you can get a lot of flavor (not to mention protein and fiber) without a lot of sodium.

Ingredients
2 cans (15 oz.) black beans, reduced or low sodium
2 cans (15 oz.) yellow corn, no salt added
½ jar (16 oz.) salsa (look for lower sodium versions)
¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped (optional)
Blue corn chips for dipping

Directions
• Drain and rinse black beans and corn and place in a large bowl
• Add about ½ jar of salsa or to taste
• Add chopped cilantro if desired
• Stir ingredients together and serve with blue corn chips


Monthly Chair Exercise
Tummy Twists
Core (abdominal, back) strength is important for balance. The tummy twist is a great way to work out your core.

Seated in a chair with good posture, hold a ball with both hands close to the body, with elbows bent and pulled in close to the ribcage (if you don’t have a ball, you can imagine you are holding a ball while performing the motion, or hold a small object, such as a can of soup or water bottle to add resistance).

Slowly rotate your torso to the right as far as you comfortably can, being sure to keep the rest of your body still and stable. Rotate back to the center and repeat in the opposite direction. Do this 8 times, with two twists counting as a full set.

Rest. Do another 8 sets (two twists each).

Keep on Moving
Why Flexibility Matters
Four types of exercise include endurance, strength, balance, and stretching. You may not think of stretching as important. However, stretching increases flexibility, which helps you do things like reach down and tie your shoe or look over your shoulder while driving.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends stretching exercises at least two days per week – daily if you’ve lost range of motion in your joints. Before stretching, warm up your muscles by walking around the house or marching in place. Stretching involves moving your joints through their entire range of motion. Hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds. You should feel a pull on the muscle but not pain (stop if you feel pain). If you have any injuries, be sure to check with your doctor before starting a stretching routine. For sample stretches, visit the following web site:

http://nihseniorhealth.gov/exerciseandphysicalactivityexercisestotry/flexibilityexercises/01.html

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For more exercises, visit the following link:
http://www.livewellagewell.info/study/2007/12-ChairExercisesUGA113006.pdf
Living Better
Be your own problem-solver

When you’re adapting to having a chronic disease, you may have uneasy feelings about trying to do something you can no longer do. For example, travel may be challenging, or you may be afraid to go to a theater show at night. In order to do what you want to do, you may need to engage in problem-solving.

There are seven steps in the problem-solving process:

1. Identify the problem. You may think of stairs as being a problem, but really it is fear of falling down the stairs that is the problem.
2. List ideas to solve the problem. You may want to call a friend to come up with a list of as many solutions as possible.
3. Pick an idea to try. As you try one idea, be sure to give it time (about two weeks) to see if it works or not.
4. Check the results. After two weeks, if all went well, your problem will be solved.
5. If you still have the problem and the solution did not work, pick another idea from your list to try.
6. Use other resources (i.e., consultants or healthcare providers) for more ideas if you still don’t have a solution to your problem.
7. Finally, if you’ve gone through your list of possible solutions and explored other resources and still have the problem, it may be that the problem is not solvable at this time. It may be solvable in the future, and other problems may be solvable now. Keep going!

To do: Identify a problem that you’re having right now and go through the problem-solving process listed above. How did it work for you?

Source: Lorig, Kate et al. Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions (2012).

Medication Manager
Don’t flush your medications

Keeping expired medications is dangerous – you may take the wrong pill or wrong dose. However, not disposing of old medications properly is dangerous for both people and the environment. Some pharmacies and law enforcement agencies have “take-back” programs. You can also use the following steps to dispose of your medication properly in your household trash:

1. Keep in the original container to help identify contents if accidentally ingested.
2. Mark out your name and prescription number.
3. Add a small amount of water or soda to dissolve pills.
4. Add a small amount of inedible items like pet litter, dirt or saw dust to absorb liquids.
5. Secure the lid with a strong tape.
6. Place bottle(s) inside an opaque container like a detergent bottle or with unappealing trash like used pet litter.
7. Hide the container in your trash.
8. DO NOT place in the recycling bin.

Upcoming Events

Matter of Balance Classes
Walton County Senior Center
Tuesday’s and Thursday’s
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
May 3 – 26, 2016

Oconee County Senior Center
Wednesday’s
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
June 8 – July 27, 2016

Living Better Workshops
Cornerstone Church
Athens, Georgia
Saturday’s
9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
August 27 – October 1, 2016

Have an event you’d like to include?
E-mail Whitney (web1975@uga.edu)
Test Yourself
Examining Your Habits

How am I doing?

1. I currently eat _______ servings of fruits most days of the week (circle one)
   a. Less than 1 serving  b. 1-2 servings  c. 3 or more servings
2. I currently eat _______ servings of vegetables most days of the week (circle one)
   a. Less than 1 serving  b. 1-2 servings  c. 3 or more servings
3. I currently eat ____ servings of whole grain products most days of the week (circle one)
   a. Less than 1 serving  b. 1-2 servings  c. 3 or more servings
4. I currently have _____ servings of milk or other dairy products most days of the week (circle one)
   a. Less than 1 serving  b. 1-2 servings  c. 3 or more servings
5. I include stretching exercises in my weekly routine (circle one)
   Yes  No
6. I tend to eat too much sodium or salt (circle one)
   Yes  No
7. I tend to eat too much sugar or sweet foods (circle one)
   Yes  No
8. I dispose of my medications properly (circle one)
   Yes  No
9. I usually think of several possible solutions for any problem I have (circle one)
   Yes  No

What do I want to change?

This month, I want to do the following to improve my health and well-being:

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = low confidence, 10 = high confidence), how confident am I that I can make the change I wrote above? (circle one)

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Questions or Comments? Contact us!
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