

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service



K-State Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program

DINING ON A DIME

Eating Better for Less

February / March

The Lowdown on High Blood Pressure

Did you know that high blood pressure is the leading cause of early death in women? Or that it's a leading cause of early death for men, second only to smoking? Healthy blood pressure numbers are less than 120 for the top number and less than 80 on the bottom.



February is American Heart Month. In this issue, *Dining on a Dime* takes a look at what you can do to help release the pressure. Following this advice can even help prevent getting high blood pressure!

Halt the Salt. One of the best ways to lower high blood pressure is to reduce the amount of salt (or sodium) that you eat. That means doing more than not using the salt shaker at the table or for cooking, although that can help. About three-fourths of the sodium in the U.S. diet is from processed foods and restaurant foods. To learn ways to cut back on salt, check out the tips on the next page.

Move More. Being physically active on a regular basis strengthens your heart. A strong heart can pump blood through the body with less effort. This decreases the blood pressure on your arteries. Increasing your physical activity level may lower your blood pressure in just a few weeks. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderately-intense aerobic activity on most days. Remember that shorter bouts of activity count, too. You can get good results with two 15-minute sessions, or three 10-minute sessions, a day.

Lose Weight. Did you know that carrying excess body weight causes your heart to work harder? This increases the pressure on your arteries. Losing just five to ten of those "extra" pounds can help your health by decreasing your blood pressure.

Limit Alcohol. Alcohol can be either good or bad for your health, depending on the amount you drink. In small amounts (less than one drink a day for women and less than two a day for men), alcohol may lower your blood pressure a little. But the protective effect is lost with too much alcohol. If you don't normally drink alcohol, experts advise against starting, because there's more potential harm than benefit from drinking it.

Source: (Accessed 1/6/11): [10 Ways to Lower Blood Pressure without Medication](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/high-blood-pressure/HI00027), Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.com/health/high-blood-pressure/HI00027

Save Money while Slashing Salt Intake

Health experts advise people at higher risk — including blacks, those who already have high blood pressure, and adults ages 51 years and older — to get no more than 1500 mg sodium daily. Here are ways to cut the salt from your diet AND to be more savvy with your money:

- **Eat more foods from the farm and fewer from the factory.** Buy as close to natural as possible, since processed packaged foods typically contain much more sodium than minimally processed ones. If you do buy a packaged food product, buy a “no added salt” or a reduced-sodium version when possible. Also, compare the food labels of similar products. For example, fresh tomatoes have virtually no sodium; the sodium content of one brand of tomato soup is 1100 mg per serving; and the sodium in another brand of tomato soup is 600 mg sodium per serving.



- **Eat restaurant foods less often.** One hamburger at a popular U.S. restaurant contains 6,400 mg sodium, which is four times more than the daily amount recommended! Cooking your own sandwich at home will likely be much lower in sodium, and will also save you time and money. If you do dine out, ask that your meal be made with no added salt. At national restaurant chains, choose lower sodium options after asking about the nutrition information of their foods.

- **Be aware of certain foods.** Foods that are high in sodium include: frozen dinners, commercially-prepared soups, canned vegetables, canned and cured meats, condiments, cheeses, breads and baked goods. An alternative choice is to make your own soups, such as the potato soup recipe on page 4.

Many processed foods that are reduced in fat or low in fat have had salt added to them to enhance their taste. For example, 1 ounce of salted peanuts contain only about half of the sodium found in 1 ounce of low-fat colby or cheddar cheese (91 mg sodium for the peanuts, 174 mg sodium for the low-fat cheese)!

- **Be smart about food labels.** The only way to really know how much sodium is in a packaged food is to read the Nutrition Facts on the label.

If you buy packaged foods, become aware of the terms that you may see on the front of the package. Below is the definition of what each claim means:

Sodium free – Fewer than 5 mg sodium per serving.

Very low in sodium – No more than 35 mg sodium per serving.

Low in sodium – No more than 140 mg sodium per serving.

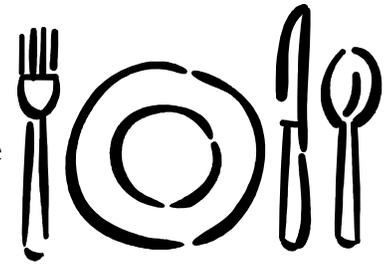
Unsalted – No salt was added during processing.

Light in sodium – Half or less of the sodium in the original product.

Reduced sodium – One-fourth or less of the sodium in the original product.

Healthy – Less than 480 mg sodium for an individual food, or 600 mg sodium for a meal (such as a frozen dinner).

HACCP in the Home



The new Food Safety Modernization Act requires food companies to develop HACCP plans. HACCP stands for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points. These plans are designed to determine potential food safety hazards or risks, and then to find ways to reduce or eliminate them.

In the spirit of this new law, *Dining on a Dime* encourages you to develop HACCP plans for your home's foods! Here are six "critical control points" where you can reduce or eliminate potential food safety hazards in your home.

1. Purchasing food. At the grocery store, choose meat and poultry products after selecting all other items. Keep packages of raw meat and poultry separated from other foods, in individual plastic bags. If your travel time home will take more than one hour, pack perishable foods in a cooler with ice.

2. Storing food. Keep refrigerators at 40 degrees F. or lower, and freezers at a maximum of 0 degrees F. Refrigerate or freeze meat and poultry immediately. Avoid thawing perishable foods at room temperature. Prevent raw juices from dripping onto other foods in the refrigerator by storing meat and poultry on the bottom shelf on a lipped plate or dish in plastic bags or in covered containers.

3. Preparing food. Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before beginning food preparation, after handling raw meat/poultry/seafood/eggs, after touching animals, after using the bathroom, after changing a diaper and after blowing your nose. Sanitize counters, equipment, utensils and cutting boards with a mixture of 1 teaspoon household bleach in 4 cups of water. Let the solution stand for several minutes on the board or counter after washing it.

4. Cooking food. Cook foods thoroughly. Use a meat thermometer to check the product in several spots to assure that a safe internal temperature has been reached and that harmful bacteria have been destroyed.

5. Serving food. Keep hot foods above 140 degrees F. and cold foods below 40 degrees F. Avoid leaving raw or cooked perishable foods at room temperature for longer than two hours.

6. Handling leftover food. For quick cooling, divide leftovers into small amounts and store them in shallow containers. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within two hours of cooking. When reheating leftovers, reheat thoroughly to a temperature of 165 degrees F., or until they are hot and steamy.

For a complete list of recommendations at each of the critical control points, visit the website, www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe/pubs/pdf/Venture/venture5_hcpp.html

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-888-369-4777.



Dining on a Dime's Cooks' Corner

Spud Soup (Makes 2 servings, each 1 1/3 cups)

For variation, substitute some of the potato with carrots, broccoli or cauliflower in this low sodium, fat-free soup.

Ingredients

- 2 cups peeled diced potatoes (white or sweet)
- 1/4 cup each chopped onion and celery
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 3/4 cup water (add more, if needed)
- 1 cup fat-free (skim) milk
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch

Directions

- 1.** In a covered non-stick saucepan, gently boil vegetables and spices in water for 10 minutes, or until potatoes are tender. Remove from heat.
- 2.** In a blender or with an electric mixer, blend milk and cornstarch. Add half of the soup mixture. Blend until almost smooth. Return blended mixture to saucepan.
- 3.** Boil gently for 2 to 3 minutes until mixture thickens, stirring constantly. Serve hot.
- 4.** Cover and refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

*Nutrition Facts per serving: 190 calories, 0 g fat, 41 g carbohydrate, 8 g protein, 0 mg cholesterol, 90 mg sodium and 3 g dietary fiber.
Daily Values: 6% vitamin A, 25% vitamin C, 15% calcium, 4% iron.*



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