



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Atlanta, GA 30341-3724

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Dear Primary Health Care Provider,

High sodium intake is associated with increased blood pressure. Along with advocating for population-wide strategies to reduce sodium intake, the American Medical Association also recommends that health care providers educate patients on how to reduce sodium intake. Average sodium intake including table salt among U.S. adults aged 20 years and older is about 3,400 mg per day. 3

Estimates show that if the U.S. population reduced dietary sodium intake by 400 mg per day, about 1.5 million cases of hypertension could be prevented, offering a potential annual savings of \$2.3 billion. Further, \$5.5 billion in annual savings could be achieved with a sodium intake reduction of 1,100 mg per day. 4,5,6

Average sodium intake among U.S. adults far exceeds national recommendations³:

- The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. Specific populations should limit sodium intake to 1,500 mg per day, including African Americans, adults aged 51 years and older, and individuals of all ages with hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease (about half of the U.S. population and the majority of adults).⁷
- Studies have shown a positive association between dietary sodium intake and stroke, ^{8,9,10} heart disease, ^{10,11,12} and renal disease. ^{10,13,14} Heart disease and stroke are leading causes of death in the United States. ¹⁵

A recent CDC study, "Primary Health Care Providers' Attitudes and Counseling Behaviors Related to Dietary Sodium Reduction," found that the majority of primary health care providers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Most of my patients should reduce their sodium intake." However, advice about sodium reduction may not be targeting the largest source of sodium in the American diet. The majority of the sodium Americans consume comes from processed and restaurant foods, yet 69% of primary health care providers reported advising their patients to remove the salt shaker from the table, and the majority reported advising patients to add less salt during cooking, even though these behaviors are unlikely to result in major sodium reduction. ¹⁶

As a primary health care provider, you are the first line of medical care and can influence the opinions and behaviors of your patients by helping them understand the most effective ways to reduce sodium.¹⁷ CDC is providing these materials to assist you in talking with your patients

about the importance of sodium reduction. The enclosed patient tips to reduce sodium can be provided in your waiting room and in patient rooms as reading material while your patients wait for services.

Sincerely,

Edward Gregg, PhD

Acting Director, Division for Heart Disease and Stroke

Prevention

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Atlanta, GA

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