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Salt (Sodium) and Potassium: What Do the Guidelines Say?

(A Dietary Guidelines for Americans Focus Area)

Facilitator Notes

Main Learning Points and Review of Healthy Steps from Last Session: *Fats: What do the Guidelines Say?*

1. We need to eat good fats in the right amounts for a healthy heart.
2. Processed foods are the biggest source of trans fats, the worst fats.
3. Use Nutrition Facts labels to make wise choices about the fats you eat.

Review Healthy Steps from last session.



Note

This session could be used for family/friend groups or sessions. It offers an opportunity for the participant and family to practice skill-building together.

Remember

It is important to acknowledge and discuss participants' successes, progress and challenges.

Materials Needed for this Session:

1. A salt shaker or box of salt and a teaspoon.
2. Nutrition Facts label for snacks (both salty and not salty, e.g. pickles, crackers, chips, canned fruit in own juice, sugar-free pudding, string cheese, etc.)

Tips for this Session

Alert: People taking lithium should not alter their intake of sodium (salt), which can affect their lithium levels, without the advice of their prescriber. Before this session, you should check with the nurse(s) to see if anyone in the group is on lithium. Let him or her know ahead of the session about the content of this session.

Share this information with participants and advise that anyone on lithium should check with their prescriber before they alter their sodium intake.

Suggestion for Topic Introduction and Relevance to Participants

(Bring in a shaker or box of salt and a teaspoon to the session. At the beginning of the session, measure out one teaspoon of salt. Have participants come up and look at it if they like)

“Do you see this salt? This is one teaspoon of salt, which is all the salt each of us need everyday. How many of you think you use this much salt a day? Raise your hands, please.”

(Acknowledge raised hands.)

“How many of you think you use a lot more salt than this every day?”

“We get a lot of hidden salt, also called sodium, in our diets. Then, some of us add salt to our food at the table because salt makes some foods taste better. Today we’re going to talk about salt.”

“For anyone who may be taking lithium, it is important that you do not alter your salt, or sodium, intake without talking with your prescriber first.”

Topic Assessment

1. B 2. C 3. A 4. A

T – topic introduction
R – relevance to participant
I – identify objectives
M – materials for session
M – motivate to use

Review of Session 20: Fats: What do the Guidelines Say?



Main Learning Points of Session 20

What were the main learning points of Session 20? If you did not attend the last session, you may guess, and also write the answers as people say them:

1. We need to eat good fats and in the right amounts for good heart health.
2. Processed foods are the biggest source of trans fats, the worst fats.
3. Use Nutrition Facts labels to make wise choices about the fats you eat.

Take a Small Healthy Step Review:

What small healthy step did you choose to practice between sessions?

Did you complete your healthy step yet?

1. **Yes.** How did it go? _____

2. **No.** What got in the way of completing your practice?

If you still plan to complete your practice, when will you do it?

3. **I didn't choose a small healthy step.**

Topic Assessment



Mark one: Pre Post

Your Score:
+ ____ out of 4

Directions:

1. Read each question carefully.
2. Read every answer before marking one.
3. Mark only one answer to each question.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Potassium makes us hold the amount of salt in our bodies.

- A. True B. False

2. An eating plan rich in _____ helps give us the potassium we need:

- A. Meats
B. Dairy (milk) products
C. Fruits and vegetables
D. Grains

3. Our bodies need only _____ of salt every day.

- A. 1 teaspoon
B. 2 tablespoons
C. 3 teaspoons
D. ½ teaspoon

4. Check with your prescriber before you use a salt substitute.

- A. True B. False

5. I am confident that I know how much salt I should eat each day.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree Unsure

Topic Assessment



6. This information is important for me to know.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree
Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly
Agree |

At the end of the session, answer these questions before turning in this paper:

7. This session helped me.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree
Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly
Agree |

8. What I liked about this session: _____

9. How this session could have been better for me: _____

Salt (Sodium) and Potassium: What Do the Guidelines Say?

Objective for this Session

1. Identify 1 reason Americans consume more salt than they need.
2. List 1 health problem affected by a high salt intake.
3. Identify at least 1 tip to reduce salt intake.



Most Americans consume much more salt (also called sodium or sodium chloride) than they need. The body needs only one teaspoon of salt per day. Almost our entire salt intake comes from prepared foods. When we include the restaurant and fast foods that we eat and the salt added at the dinner table or during cooking, it is easy to see that we probably eat more salt than we need.

Main Learning Point #1

**Our bodies need only 1 teaspoon
of salt every day.**

Did you know? On average, the higher a person's salt intake, the higher the person's blood pressure. Too much salt also can lead to water retention (holding water) and, eventually, high blood pressure. High blood pressure increases the chances of heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure and kidney disease. It is important to our health not to eat too much salt.

Do you take lithium? Yes No Unsure

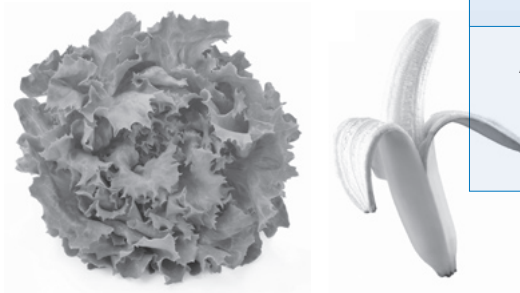
If you take lithium or are unsure if you do, please check with your prescriber before you change your salt intake, as this can change your lithium level.

Salt (Sodium) and Potassium: What Do the Guidelines Say?

(continued)

Potassium helps balance out the effect of salt on blood pressure. Because salt and potassium work together, they help to balance water in our bodies. It is important to eat foods with less salt and to eat foods rich in potassium. An eating plan that is full of fruits and vegetables can help provide the recommended amount of potassium that the body needs.

Potassium rich foods include green leafy vegetables (like spinach or dark lettuce), fruits from the vine (bananas) and root vegetables (like beets or turnips).



Main Learning Point #2

An eating plan rich in fruits and vegetables helps give us the potassium that we need.



Do I eat a diet rich in potassium? Yes No Unsure

Take a moment and think about how much salt we take in based on our snacking and eating habits:

1. Write down your two favorite snacks. _____

2. How salty are these snacks?

very salty somewhat salty not at all salty unsure

3. How often do you eat restaurant food or fast food every week? _____

Do you think you eat a lot of salt?

Yes No Unsure

Salt (Sodium) and Potassium: What Do the Guidelines Say?

(continued)



Below is a list of popular high-salt items. Please check off all that you eat on a regular basis:

- pickled foods (like dill pickles)
- canned vegetables and soups
- snack foods (such as potato chips and corn chips)
- lunch meats
- packaged dry mixes (i.e. instant soups and sauce packets)
- frozen dinners

The main Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommendations for salt are:

1. Eat less than 1 teaspoon of salt each day.
2. Choose and prepare foods with little salt. At the same time, eat potassium-rich foods such as fruits and vegetables.

What about salt substitutes? Salt substitutes (onion powder, garlic powder) may be acceptable for most people, but they can be harmful to some people with certain medical conditions. It's always a good idea to check with your prescriber before you use salt substitutes.

Tips for reducing salt intake:

- Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Use herbs and salt-free spices to flavor foods.
- Reduce your intake of processed and packaged foods.
- Eat more home-cooked meals.
- Do not add salt at the table – consider using a salt substitute instead.
- Add extra water to canned soup with some dried herbs for extra flavor.
- Rinse canned vegetables with water before use.

Choose a tip from the list above and start using it today.

Salt (Sodium) and Potassium: What Do the Guidelines Say?

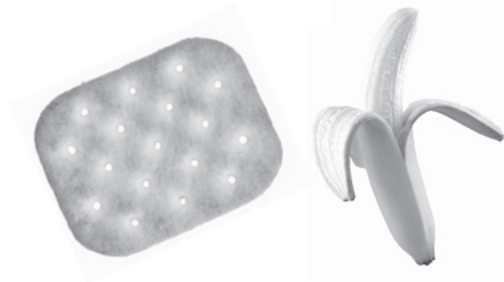
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Note: Look at the sodium (salt) mg and also at the percent Daily Value (DV) on a Nutrition Facts label. The Daily Value helps you determine if one serving of a food is high or low in a nutrient. Any food containing more than 5% DV of sodium or over 140 mg of sodium is considered high in sodium.

Keep it Fresh: Eating fruits and vegetables wins every time! Choose fruits and vegetables to reduce sodium and increase potassium. Eating fruits and vegetables gives you many health benefits. If you have the option of a cracker (36 mg. of sodium) or a banana (1mg. of sodium), which is the healthier choice? Please check off your answer below:



- The cracker
- The banana



Main Learning Point #3

**Eating fruits and vegetables
are healthy foods that win
every time!**

Review & Moving Forward



The *main learning points* of this session are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Take A “Small Healthy Step” to Ensure Your Success!

It’s important to practice new knowledge and skills. What will you do between now and the next session? Please choose one healthy step from the list below:

- 1. STUDY.** I am going to reread my handout at least once.
- 2. SHARE.** I will share my handout with someone in my support system. I will ask _____ to read it and talk with me about how much salt we eat.
- 3. PRACTICE.** I will practice one of the salt reduction tips and use it as a food goal for tomorrow. My food goal for tomorrow is:

- 4. OTHER** (Choose Your Own “Small Healthy Step”): _____

Take an “Extra Small Healthy Step”

- 5. COOK.** I will use one of the recipes in the *Solutions for Wellness* Recipes Section in session 15. I will not add salt to the recipe, and I will not add salt at the table.