Keep It Low: Low-Sodium Choices

Why Go Low-Sodium?

A prospective study in Finland showed that for each 2,400 mg increase in 24-hour urinary sodium, cardiovascular disease mortality increased by 36% and total mortality increased by 22% (Lancet 20091; 357: 848-51).

Worldwide hypertension is the #1 risk factor for earlier mortality in middle-aged and older adults.

Cutting down on sodium is important to heart health and can have a positive impact on blood pressure.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that people consume no more than 2300 mg of sodium every day. People who are age 51 and older, who are African-American, or who have high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease should get no more than 1500 mg of sodium per day.

So, How Can You Go Low-Sodium?

Choose Fresh, Unprocessed Foods
Fresh, unprocessed foods typically contain very little sodium. Stock up on seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables! If you're not sure how to use these tasty treats, visit http://www.foodandhealth.com/recipes.php for simple and quick meals that feature plenty of fresh foods.

Skip Added Sodium

Lots of sodium lurks in canned and frozen foods. Look for varieties with a "No Salt Added" label and be sure to check the Daily Value (DV) for sodium. You can find the DV listed on the Nutrition Facts label.

Think About Grains
According to the Center for Disease Control, "36.9% of average sodium consumed came from grains, and these included highly processed foods like bread, frozen meals, and soups." (Sodium Intake Among Adults --- United States, 2005-2006; Weekly; June 25, 2010 / 59(24);746-749). Choose whole grains that you can cook yourself, like rice and oatmeal. Bread and boxed grain meal mixes can pack a sodium wallop!

Cook at Home

A great way to go low-sodium is to do most of your cooking at home. That way you can determine exactly how much salt is going into your meal. Check the nutrition information for all your ingredients before you begin. This will ensure that your meal is low-sodium.