

WHY YOU NEED TO SAY NO TO EXCESS SALT

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With the festive season on, most of us throw caution to the winds and indulge in all kinds of delicacies both sweet and savoury. But before you reach out for that tempting deep-fried, salt-laden plate of fries, be forewarned: a study has found that high salt intake is associated with increased risk of hypertension and heart failure.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Senior cardiologist Dr Santosh Kumar Dora says, "Heart failure is when heart is unable to pump enough blood as per the need of the body. Sodium retains water, so high sodium in the blood will retain water and increase the blood volume. This puts stress on the heart and may lead to heart failure."

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED LEVELS OF SALT INTAKE?

In patients who already are suffering from heart failure or those who have low pumping efficiency, increased salt intake puts the heart at a great risk, say cardiologists. Dr Dora says, "In these cases the recommended salt intake is less than two to three gms per day. In patients who suffer from hypertension, the recommended salt intake is less than five gms per day."

OUR BODY NEEDS SODIUM

Sodium is a mineral that's essential for life say doctors. It helps control our body's fluid balance and also helps send nerve impulses and affects muscle function. Senior interventional cardiologist Dr Tilak Suvarna says, "While we do need some sodium in our diet to help regulate fluid in the body, the amount of salt we eat is far more than we require. It's the excess of sodium that's the problem in relation to blood pressure. When there's extra sodium in our bloodstream, it attracts water into our blood vessels, increasing the total amount of blood flowing inside our blood vessels, leading to increase in the blood pressure. There is very convincing evidence which has shown that regularly eating too much salt puts us at increased risk of developing high blood pressure. High blood pressure is the main cause of strokes and a major cause of heart attacks and heart failures, the most common causes of death and illness in the world."

RESEARCHERS SAY

According to a study, high salt intake is associated with a doubled risk of heart failure. The findings showed that people who consume more than 13.7 grams of salt daily may be at twice the higher risk of heart failure compared to those consuming less than 6.8 grams. The researchers said that this salt-related increase in heart failure risk was independent of blood pressure level — increased level of which is also a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases.



A bowl of potato wafers contains between 170 to 215 milligrams of sodium



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FOODS THAT CONTAIN HIGH SODIUM LEVELS

In this age of fast living, most of us have packaged and/or pre-prepared foods. What most do not know that about 77 per cent of the sodium we consume comes from there. Dr Suvarna says, "Since most of the sodium we eat, is in our food before we buy it, many people unfortunately don't realise they are eating too much salt. Thus it makes it hard for people to limit how much sodium they are eating." Nutritionists say that all kinds of processed and prepared foods contain high levels of sodium. Most packaged foods are high in sodium as it is used like a preservative. Avoiding excess sauces and seasonings can help say doctors. Pickles are also very rich in salt content. Apart from this, there are many foods that are actually swimming in salt but are not as obvious. Here is a list...

● Cottage cheese

Panzer or cottage cheese that is not homemade can have around 1,000 mg of sodium in one cup. And that is around 40 per cent of your entire day's intake.

● Cereal

It is touted to be a good breakfast but some packaged cereals are said to have 180 to 300 mg of sodium per serving.

● Baked foods

Foods that are baked rely on sugar and sodium as a preservative. Some baked foods are known to have around 300 mg sodium.

● Soups

Most canned or restaurant soups have around 1,000 to 1,500 mg of sodium per bowl.

● Burgers and hot dogs

Even the vegetarian versions of these foods are loaded with salt. The patties alone have around 500 mg of salt.

● Hot chocolate and pancakes

If you are not have the homemade versions of hot chocolate drinks and pancakes, you might end up having around 1,500-200 mg of sodium. Avoiding ready-made mixes of these foods is a great idea.

● Packaged raw chicken

Opting for packages of organic chicken will help because, chicken breasts sometimes have high-sodium flavouring solution injected in them.

DID YOU KNOW?

Eating less salt has also been shown to reduce the risk of kidney disease, osteoporosis, stomach cancer and even headaches

KEEP IN MIND...

● The World Health Organisation recommends a maximum of five grams of salt (which is around one teaspoon) per day. The physiological need is two-three grams per day.

● Table salt, also known as Sodium Chloride is the biggest source of sodium intake is directly related to um in our diets. It is made up of 40 per cent sodium and 60 per cent chloride.

● Cardiologists say that even if one does not have high blood pressure, eating less sodium can help blunt the rise in blood pressure that occurs with age, and reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.

● Having excess salt leads to water retention and this extra water in our body can also lead to bloating and weight gain.

● Sodium that is naturally



Salt intake is directly related to um in our diets. It is

present in our diets amounts to about 12 per cent and the part we add while cooking or while eating our meals constitutes about 11 per cent. Dr Suvarna says, "So, even if you are not using a salt shaker or having table salt, probably getting too much sodium."

● So far, high salt intake has been associated with increased risk of hypertension, coronary heart disease and stroke.

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