



## Stewardship of the Body

“I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made” (Ps. 139)

### Nutrition: Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010

#### Key Recommendation: Reduce Sodium Intake

**What is the key recommendation regarding sodium?** The key recommendation is to reduce our sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day. Persons who are 51 and older and those of any age who are African American or have hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease should take in no more than 1500 mg. of sodium per day. The 1,500 mg recommendation applies to about half of the U.S. population, including children, and the majority of adults.

**Why should we reduce our sodium intake?** Although sodium is an essential nutrient and is needed by the body in relatively small quantities, too much sodium causes problems. On average, the higher an individual’s sodium intake, the higher the individual’s blood pressure. It has been shown that decreasing the sodium intake results in lower blood pressure. Keeping blood pressure in the normal range reduces an individual’s risk of cardiovascular disease, congestive heart failure, and kidney disease.

**How much sodium do we generally take in?** Most Americans consume more sodium than they need. The estimated average intake of sodium for all Americans ages 2 years and older is approximately 3,400 mg per day which is far greater than the recommended intake of 1500 or 2300 mg. per day.

**What are the main sources of the sodium that we take in?** The main source of sodium in our diet is salt. But it isn’t just the salt in the salt shaker. Most sodium comes from salt added during food processing. Salt is used in preparing and processing a lot of foods that we eat. Many types of processed foods such as cold cuts, sausage and prepared meals contain large amounts of salt and so contribute to the high intake of sodium.

Other sources of sodium include such foods as yeast breads, cheese, salad dressing, ready-to-eat cereals, and soups. Although these foods may contain less sodium, we have a tendency to eat more of them, therefore taking in more sodium than we realize.

**How can we reduce our sodium intake?** There are a number of things we can do to reduce our sodium intake, including:

- Reading labels to determine the sodium content of the food
- Purchasing foods that are lower in sodium
- Eating out less often as restaurants are notorious for using large amounts of salt
- When eating out, try to order lower sodium foods
- Limiting or avoiding fast foods
- Rinsing canned vegetable before heating or cooking to wash away some of the salt
- Avoiding processed foods & pre-prepared meals
- Focusing on fresh meats & vegetables
- Using flavorings when cooking other than salt, such as herbs, spices & salt-free seasonings

Source: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010