

PRESENTATION GUIDE: “THE SECRETS OF SODIUM”

INGREDIENTS FOR A DYNAMITE DEMONSTRATION

Supplies

- Straws (for each participant)
- Baggies with labels (2)
- Salt (nine-26 oz. containers)
- Measuring spoons
- Cup of water
- Blank paper (for each participant)
- Pens

Handouts

- Secrets of Sodium Presentation
- Sample Menu—Where’s the Limit?
- Sodium Food Label
- Low Sodium Foods
- High Sodium Foods
- Tips to Cut Down on Sodium
- Seasonings Instead of Salt

STEP 1: INTRODUCTION

Today we’re going to share some secrets. We’re going to talk about an important health risk factor that most people don’t know much about, but should become aware of to stay healthy. This hidden risk factor that contributes to both heart disease and stroke is high blood pressure, or “hypertension.”

The Centers for Disease Control says that **one in three** people in the United States has high blood pressure. And, according to the American Heart Association, **nearly half**, or four out of ten African Americans have high blood pressure. For all of us, the chances of having high blood pressure increase as we get older.

And here’s another secret. If you have high blood pressure, eating too much sodium is likely to make it worse. Later we’re going to learn about where to find the hidden sodium in our diets and how to do something about it so we can take charge of our health.

[Ask the audience]

- How many of you know someone who has had a heart attack?
- How many of you know someone who has had a stroke?
- How many of you know someone who has high blood pressure?

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STEP 2: KNOW YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Let's talk about blood pressure:

- Blood pressure is the force created by the heart as it pushes blood through the blood vessels in your body.
- High blood pressure occurs when the force of blood flowing through your vessels is too high and your heart must work harder. This increased pressure puts extra stress on the blood vessels themselves and on vital organs such as your heart and kidneys.
- Let me show you what happens to your blood vessels when you do have high blood pressure:

Demonstration of High Blood Pressure

Take a straw and blow through it. What happens? Air flows freely through the straw. This is how it feels to have normal blood pressure. Now pinch the straw in the middle and blow through it. What happens? See how much more force you have to use to get the air through the straw when it's blocked?

This is the same thing your heart has to do every minute of the day just to pump your blood to your organs and throughout your entire body.

- If you have high blood pressure, this excessive force is damaging the inside of your blood vessels, and that damage can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure, kidney failure, or blindness.
- Your heart could be working this hard and you don't even know it. That's why high blood pressure is often called "the silent killer". It is especially dangerous because there are no clear signs. A person can have it and not even know it.

Here's a really important question:

How many of you know what your blood pressure is?

- Everybody should know their own blood pressure because people with high blood pressure are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke. These diseases are the No. 1 and No. 3 killers in the United States today.
- Normal blood pressure is at or below 120 over 80 (120/80).



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- If your blood pressure is above 120 over 80 you may be at risk for high blood pressure, and the only way to tell if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked.
- If you *do* have high blood pressure, here’s what you need to do:
 1. See a doctor.
 2. Follow the treatment your doctor prescribes which may include medication, losing weight, physical activity and healthy eating, including reducing sodium intake. Salt is the biggest source of sodium in your diet.
- Even if you don't have high blood pressure, it is still a good idea to limit your salt intake.

STEP 3: UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF SODIUM ON BLOOD PRESSURE

Now we’re going to talk about blood pressure and sodium:

- Experts believe that a diet high in sodium is a major cause of high blood pressure. It is also suggested that people trying to lower their blood pressure should also boost their potassium. Potassium is a mineral much like sodium. In the body, it works together with sodium to maintain proper fluid balance.
- The good news is that for most people, eating less sodium is an important step in lowering your blood pressure, which in turn will reduce your risk of developing heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.

How Much Sodium Does the Average American Eat?

- Let me show you what the average American’s **yearly** salt consumption looks like:
[Pull nine 26 oz. salt containers out from under the table and place on the table for the audience to see] This is equal to a gallon and a half of salt!
- Experts recommend that a **safe daily intake** of sodium for healthy adults is less than 2,300 mg, which is about 1 teaspoon of salt. And it looks like this *[Show baggie]*.
- However, for adults over age 51, and those of any age who are African American or have hypertension, diabetes or chronic kidney disease, the new 2010 Dietary Guidelines recommend a sodium intake of 1,500 mg., which is about half a teaspoon of salt.
- Now let’s see how quickly we can reach that safe upper limit of 2,300 mg. eating some of our favorite foods.



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STEP 4: DEMONSTRATE—WHERE’S THE SODIUM LIMIT?

- *[Show Sample Menu handout]* On this side of the handout, we’ve selected a typical menu of popular foods to show you how easy it is for sodium to sneak in to your daily diet. On the other side of the handout, the graphic shows what’s happening to the daily limit of sodium as we eat these foods over the course of a day.
- Let’s take a look at a typical American breakfast. If you eat bacon, eggs, a bagel and orange juice, you’ll have close to 1,200 mg. of sodium, which is about **half a teaspoon of salt**. *[Ask for a volunteer to spoon the salt into a baggie and hold it up for the audience to see].*
- *[Refer to Sample Menu handout]* Now let’s see what happens when we add the sodium from this typical soup and sandwich lunch. All together lunch contains about 2,400 mg. of sodium, which is more than **1 teaspoon of salt**. *[Ask the volunteer to add 1 teaspoon of salt into the baggie from breakfast, and show the baggie]*
- On the backside of the handout *[hold up the “Where’s the Limit?” drawing of salt shakers]* we can see how we’ve already gone into the Danger Zone, because lunch alone has more sodium than your entire daily limit!
- So, with breakfast and lunch we’re up to 3,600 mg. of sodium. Can anyone tell me what is the recommended daily limit of sodium? That’s right—2,300 mg. We’re **over the limit** and we haven’t even had dinner yet!
- Let’s see what happens when we add the 3,400 mg. sodium from a fast food dinner, which is about **1½ teaspoons of salt**. We now have a grand total of 7,000 mg. of sodium, or 3 teaspoons of salt, which is **more than three times** the recommended daily amount of sodium! And, close to five times the recommended daily amount for those at risk.
- Here’s what 3 teaspoons looks like *[show baggie]*. And again, here’s what the recommended amount looks like *[show baggie]*.
- *[Give the baggie with 3 teaspoons of salt to the volunteer]* Now I’m going to ask our volunteer to pour the 3 teaspoons of salt from our typical menu into this cup of water. *[Hold up cup of salt water]* This is the amount of salt most of us consume in a day!
- *[Ask]* Who would like to drink this?



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STEP 5: MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES

You’ve seen how easy it is for too much sodium to get into your diet, but where does all this sodium come from?

- It’s surprising, but **only a small amount** of the sodium we eat comes from **adding salt** at the table or adding salt when we cook.
- What’s really important to understand is that **almost 80 percent** of the sodium we eat is “hidden” in **prepared or processed foods**.
- It gets into our diet from breakfast cereals, cheese, frozen dinners, fast food, smoked meats, canned vegetables, salad dressing, sauces, condiments and snack foods like crackers and chips.

Reading Food Labels

- The only way to know how much sodium is hidden in these prepared foods is to learn to read the food label. [Distribute Food Label handout.] Here’s an example of a food label for a product that contains sodium.
- Every packaged food product contains a Nutrition Facts label. Check the label and look for the word “Sodium.” Can anyone tell me how much sodium is in this package of Cheetos?
- You may also find sodium in the Ingredients list. It comes in many forms in addition to salt. Take a look at all the sodium ingredients in this package of Cheetos!
- So, if you don’t look at the label, you’ll never know how loaded with sodium many food products are.

STEP 6: CUT DOWN ON YOUR SODIUM INTAKE

By now, I think everyone is hoping for some tips on how we can stay within the recommended limits of 2,300 mg (or less) of sodium per day! Here are five suggestions to help you change the way you eat:



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1. Choose fresh foods and eat more fruits and vegetables—they are extremely low in sodium and a source of potassium.
2. Downsize your portions. In general the more calories a meal has, the more sodium it has.
3. Become aware of high sodium foods and try to avoid them (and to give you a hint we’ve provided you with a list of high sodium foods).
4. Prepare your own foods so you can control the amount of sodium. Use herbs, spices and citrus instead of salt in cooking and at the table (handout)
5. If you must eat prepared foods, learn to read labels so you can choose low sodium alternatives.

INTERACTIVE EXERCISE— MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES

Let’s see if we can practice making healthier choices:

Take a blank piece of paper and write down the items you ate in one meal yesterday. Using your Tips for Cutting Down on Sodium and your Low Sodium Foods list, write down one or two changes you would make in the meal from yesterday to reduce your sodium intake. Then share your ideas with a partner and hear about the changes they would make.

[Ask] Would anyone like to tell us about the changes they would make in their meal?

STEP 7: SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW

We know it’s challenging to make significant changes in the way you eat. Perhaps the most important tip of all is to **start small and gradually work up to bigger changes**. We’ve given you tools to show you where to find the sodium in your diet and suggested how to reduce your sodium so you can lower your risk of high blood pressure and heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. We hope these tools will help you get started with your healthier lifestyle.

The secrets of sodium are out. Now it’s up to you to share the secrets with others. Don’t keep them to yourself!



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