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## **Heart-Healthy Tips: Consume Less Sodium**

Most of the sodium we consume is in the form of salt. Too much sodium is bad for your health. It can increase your blood pressure and your risk for a heart attack or stroke. Heart disease and stroke are the first and third killers of men and women in the United States each year and the leading cause of line-of-duty firefighter fatalities.

Current dietary guidelines recommend that adults in general should consume no more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. However, if you are in the following population groups, you should consume no more than 1,500 mg per day:

- ▶ You are 40 years of age or older.
- ▶ You are African-American.
- ▶ You have high blood pressure.

A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that two out of three (69 percent) adults in the United States meet these criteria for especially high risk for health problems from consuming too much sodium. Eating less sodium can help prevent, lower, or even control blood pressure.

Most of the sodium we eat (77 percent) comes from packaged, processed, store-bought, and restaurants foods. Only about 5 percent comes from salt added during cooking, and about six percent comes from being added at the table. Naturally occurring sodium accounts for 12 percent of the sodium that we consume. You can find out how much sodium you are eating by checking the labels on food products and adding up the sodium milligrams. If at a restaurant, ask for nutritional information facts that include sodium.

Try these simple tips to reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke by limiting your sodium intake:

- ▶ Know your recommended limits for daily sodium intake. Talk to your health care provider to determine your nutrition needs.
- ▶ Choose foods like fresh fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Read the nutrition label of the foods you purchase.
- ▶ In the soup aisle, look for reduced-sodium items – the average can of chicken noodle soup contains more than 85 percent of your daily recommended value of sodium.
- ▶ Ask for foods with no or low salt at restaurants.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program*

*Find more health and wellness tips and resources for first responders at [www.healthy-firefighter.org](http://www.healthy-firefighter.org).*