

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

Answers from Amy

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February 11, 2016

SALTY SITUATIONS - MOVING BEYOND THE SALT SHAKER!

Do you ever find yourself asking whether you should focus on reducing sodium or salt? We hear many different messages about reducing the amount of sodium, salt, and sodium containing ingredients in the foods we eat.

Surprisingly, sodium is found more often in processed foods, such as casseroles, pizza, and cold cuts, than the salt shaker.

One message is clear, Americans tend to consume more sodium than what is recommended and should limit the amount of sodium eaten daily.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2010) recommends limiting daily sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams. Eating too much sodium may lead to high blood pressure, which may increase the risk for a heart attack and stroke. Reducing sodium, which includes salt or other sodium containing ingredients, is beneficial in reducing risks for these health related conditions. Follow these tips to reduce daily sodium intake.

Read the nutrition label. The nutrition facts label is one way to identify foods low or high in sodium. The percent daily value listed on the nutrition facts label can help you quickly determine if a food is low or high in sodium. Remember this rule for sodium, if the percent daily value is five or less this is a good bet! If the percent daily value is twenty percent or more leave it at the store! Be sure to choose foods with five percent sodium more often.

Know foods with sodium. Knowing common foods high in sodium can help to make choosing lower sodium options easier. Major sources of sodium include processed foods like canned products, breads, deli meats, snack foods, and mixed dishes. Look for foods labeled as "low sodium" or "reduced sodium" and choose these foods.

Choose lower sodium foods at the store. Choosing foods lower in sodium can help reduce your daily sodium intake.

When you are at the store, compare different brands for condiments, canned foods, breads, and other sodium containing foods. Different brands of foods can have different sodium levels. Choose the lowest sodium between the foods you compare.

Reducing sodium in the foods we eat can take a little practice. The tips listed are just a few of the many ways to begin reducing sodium.

Written by: Danielle Hammond-Krueger, MPH, RD, LD, Extension Program Specialist, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, College Station, Texas.

HEALTHY EATING FOR AN ACTIVE LIFE

"For youth and adults participating in physical activity like hiking, swimming, or various sports, healthy eating is essential for optimizing performance. Combining good nutrition and physical activity can lead to a healthier lifestyle," says Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agent Amy Kress. Use these tips from the United States Department of Agriculture's MyPlate website (www.choosemyplate.gov) to combine good nutrition and physical activity to make the most of your summer!

First, maximize with nutrient-packed foods. Give your body the nutrients it needs by eating a variety of nutrient-packed food, including whole grains, lean protein, fruits and vegetables, and low-fat or fat-free dairy. Eat fewer foods high in solid fats, added sugars, and sodium (salt).

Next, energize with grains! Your body's quickest energy source comes from grain foods such as bread, pasta, oatmeal, cereals, and tortillas. Be sure to make at least half of your grain food choices whole-grain foods like whole-wheat bread, tortillas, pasta and brown rice.

Power up with protein. Protein is essential for building and repairing muscle. Choose lean or low-fat cuts of beef and pork, and skinless chicken or turkey. Choose seafood protein sources twice a week.

Quality protein choices come from plant based foods, too! Choose beans and peas (kidney, pinto, black or white, beans, chickpeas, hummus), soy products (tofu, veggie burgers, tempeh), and unsalted nuts and seeds.

Don't forget the fruits and vegetables! Get the nutrients your body needs by eating a variety of colors. Try blue, red, or black berries; red, green, or yellow peppers; and dark greens like spinach and kale. Choose fresh, frozen, low-sodium canned, dried, and 100% juice options.

Be sure to also include dairy foods such as fat-free and low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt, and fortified soy beverages

(soymilk) to build and maintain strong bones needed for everyday activities.

Hydration is critical in the warm summer months! Stay hydrated by drinking water instead of sugary drinks. Keep a filled reusable water bottle with you to always have water on hand.

Want to learn more? For personalized nutrition information based on your age, gender, height, weight, and current physical activity level visit www.SuperTracker.usda.gov

Remember, physical activity is essential for good health. Aim for at least 2 ½ hours of physical activity each week that requires moderate effort. A few examples include brisk walking, biking, swimming, and skating. Spread activities over the week, but do that at least 10 minutes at a time.

Written by Amanda R. Scott, MS, RD, LD, Program Specialist, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, College Station, Texas. August 2015.

FOOD ALLERGIES - DO YOU HAVE THEM?

Does your tongue itch when you eat shrimp or nuts? Does your stomach ache when you eat dairy products? According to Amy Kress, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent in Floyd County, you may have food allergies...but, you might not. People often confuse food allergy with food intolerance, she/he says. Food allergy affects the immune system and can range in reaction from mild to life-threatening – even if a tiny amount of the offending food is ingested, the allergic person can have a severe reaction. Food intolerance, however, is typically related to inability to metabolize an ingredient and is usually dose specific – meaning you can eat small amounts of the offending food without a reaction. The most common food allergies are milk, egg, peanut, tree nut (walnut, cashew, etc.), fish, shellfish (shrimp, crab, etc.), soy, and wheat.

Recent epidemiologic studies cited in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology suggest that nearly 4% of Americans are afflicted with food allergies, a prevalence much higher than appreciated in the past. Still, approximately 20% of the U.S. population alters their diet for a “perceived reaction,” which may or may not be food allergy.

If you suspect you have food allergy, the first thing you should do is see your doctor, says Extension Health Associate, Janet Pollard. You will likely be referred to an allergist or immunologist who specializes in such disorders. The allergist will likely perform a physical exam and ask for a detailed history. This information is extremely important, says Pollard. Without your help in discussing past symptoms and reactions, it is very difficult for the allergist to assess the potential culprits of the problem. Once your doctor has some ideas about what may be causing the symptoms, he/she will

try to diagnose food allergy with some of the following measures:

I. Having you keep a written record of your diet and when you have a reaction.

II. Having you participate in an elimination diet, in which certain foods are taken completely out of the diet to see if it eliminates the symptoms.

III. Performing a skin test, in which small amounts of a potential allergen are placed under the skin to see if it creates a local reaction.

IV. Performing a double-blind food challenge, in which capsules are ingested with specific food ingredients to see if a reaction occurs – neither patient nor the person administering the test knows what is in the capsules (this eliminates psychological variables).

V. Performing a blood test, which is sent to a laboratory to see if food-specific Immunoglobulin- E (IgE) antibodies are present. These IgE antibodies suggest that your body thinks the food is a foreign agent and tries to fight it off, producing harmful chemicals such as histamine. Blood tests are typically expensive and used on those with severe reactions, since the other tests could result in a life-threatening reaction.

Common, mild symptoms of food allergy may include hives, swelling, itchy-red rash, eczema, itching or swelling of lips, cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, itchy-watery eyes, runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, coughing, or wheezing. More severe symptoms can include shortness of breath, difficulty swallowing, tightness of chest, itching or swelling of tongue or throat, change in voice, drop in blood pressure, fainting, and the most severe reaction – anaphylactic shock. Anaphylactic shock can be fatal, either through swelling that shuts off the airway or through a dramatic drop in blood pressure.

If you are diagnosed with food allergy, it is important to learn how to manage your food allergy and to educate others. There is no cure for food allergy. The only way to manage food allergy is by strict avoidance of the offending food. To avoid the food you must read food labels and learn terminology that may be used on the label to identify said allergens; talk to your host, chef, or wait staff when dining away from home; educate others about cross-contamination and how to administer medications in an emergency, including antihistamine and epinephrine.

Source: Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service

FAVORITE RECIPES

TROPICAL SALSA

- 1 ripe avocado, peeled
- 1 ripe papaya, peeled
- 2 ripe tomatoes, seeded
- ½ cup pineapple chunks, drained
- 2 fresh jalapeno peppers, seeded and finely minced
- 4 green onions, trimmed and finely sliced
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- juice of 1 lemon

Wash your hands and clean your cooking area. Clean the tops of canned food items before opening them. Wash, peel, seed and chop avocado, papaya, tomatoes, peppers and onions. Place all ingredients into a mixing bowl and mix well. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

SPICY CONFETTI RICE

- 3 cups cooked brown rice, chilled
- ½ medium yellow or red onion, diced
- ½ small fresh jalapeno (optional)
- ½ cup canned corn
- ½ cup canned black beans
- ½ cup diced and seeded tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro
- 2 cups salsa

Wash hands and cooking area. Wash and cut all of your vegetables and put them in a large mixing bowl. Add in the rice, canned corn, canned beans, diced seedless tomatoes, cumin, salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate for 45 minutes or overnight. Just before you serve the salad, toss in the salsa and cilantro. Serve cold



SPICY TORTILLA SOUP

- ½ to 1 pound ground meat (pork, beef, turkey)
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 2 15-ounce cans crushed tomatoes
- 1 15-ounce can (2 cups) chicken broth
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 1 15-ounce can black beans
- 1 cup salsa
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 corn tortillas cut into thin strips

Wash hands and cooking area. In a large saucepan, brown the pork and onion over medium high heat. Add the tomatoes, chicken broth, salsa and spices to the pork and onion mixture. Cover and simmer it for 20 minutes. Add the tortilla strips. Simmer for another 5 to 10 minutes or until the tortilla strips are soft. Serve hot and refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers

SPINACH SPREAD

- 1 10-ounce package, frozen, chopped spinach
- 1 cup fat-free cream cheese
- ½ cup low-fat yogurt
- ¼ cup onions, minced
- ½ fresh tomato, minced
- 2 tablespoons almonds, sliced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- pepper to taste

Wash your hands and clean your cooking area. Squeeze frozen spinach by hand to remove all moisture or wrap in paper towels and squeeze. For a smoother texture chop spinach. In a bowl, combine spinach, cream cheese, yogurt, onions, tomato, almonds, salt, garlic powder and pepper to taste, mix well. Spread can be served immediately or covered and refrigerated for later use.

Answers From Amy is a publication of the Floyd
County Extension Service.



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