



salt increases blood pressure

Forget AIDS, cancer, and famine for the moment. Increased blood pressure is the most common cause of death in the world! Even if you don't have it by middle age, the Framingham study, ongoing for the past 50 years in the U.S., tells us you have a 90 percent risk of developing hypertension before you die.

sodium is the culprit

There are several reasons why we develop high blood pressure, but sodium—one component of common table salt—is considered the key culprit.

Salt-free tribal societies around the world have almost no risk of dying from high blood pressure. Chimpanzees eating nothing but fruit and vegetables, and they develop high blood pressure only when salt is added to their diet.

While blood pressure rises faster in some people, it still rises, especially as you consume more sodium. The good news is that you can prevent this rise and even manage hypertension without medication by controlling your salt intake.

but I don't use salt!

Many people who don't add salt to their cooking or use a salt shaker believe they are following a low-salt diet, but research shows that up to 80 percent of our sodium comes hidden in processed foods—including common staples such as bread,

cheese, and breakfast cereals.

Cutting down on salt is a healthful practice for the whole family. Cutting the amount of salt children eat by a full half results in an almost immediate drop in their blood pressure and lessens the subsequent rise in blood pressure with age. Reducing your blood pressure is particularly important if you are overweight, are an older person, or already have high blood pressure.

low-sodium diet hints

1. Eat mostly fresh foods, and eat them without any added salt.
2. Check the nutrition facts on food labels, and buy only those processed foods in which sodium, counted in milligrams, is less than half the energy in calories.
3. Look for "salt free" or "low sodium" claims on labels. Products labeled "reduced sodium" are required to have a minimum 25 percent reduction, so the final sodium level may still be high. For example, a typical reduced sodium soy sauce can contain more than 5000 milligrams per 100 grams.

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See the latest at <http://www.sueradd.com>.