BITE OF HOPE
NEWSLETTER



Editorial Message

At Bite of HOPE, we know that small dietary changes can have a major impact on your well-being. This month, we invite you to reflect on a nutrient that often goes unnoticed but directly influences our health: sodium.

Sodium is essential for body function, but an excess can affect blood pressure and heart health. We invite you to discover how to identify its hidden sources, reduce it without sacrificing flavor, and make more conscious decisions in your daily cooking.

Small adjustments in your diet can make a huge difference. Together, we can learn to enjoy delicious meals while taking care of our health.

With love,
The Bite of HOPE Team

Bite of HOPE
A HOPE CLINIC INITIATIVE

Sodium: An Ally to Understand and Balance

Taking care of our health also means paying attention to the nutrients we consume daily. This month, we are focusing on an essential nutrient that, in excess, can affect our well-being: **sodium**. Although necessary for basic functions like fluid balance and muscle/nerve function, high intake can lead to high blood pressure, impact heart health, and increase water retention.

Sodium is naturally found in foods like vegetables, meats, and dairy, but most of it comes from processed and prepared foods: canned soups, cold cuts, bread, sauces, and fast food. Knowing these sources allows us to make more conscious and balanced choices.

Key Tips on Sodium:

- Control, don't eliminate: Sodium is necessary, but harmful in excess.
- Read labels: Identifying high-sodium foods is the best way to reduce intake without sacrificing flavor.
- Cook more at home: Preparing fresh meals allows you to adjust salt levels and use herbs and spices for flavor.

Balanced sodium consumption is linked to healthy blood pressure, lower cardiovascular risk, and more stable general well-being. Learning to balance this nutrient is a simple yet powerful step toward a healthier life.



The True Price of Salt: Cardiovascular Care and Nutritional Recommendations

Since the dawn of humanity, a mineral has existed that creates empires, starts wars, and keeps hearts beating in sync. It's not gold, silver, or bronze! It is the history of salt. Long before it was in today's kitchens, salt was **"white gold."** Romans received payment in salt (salarium), as it was fundamental for food preservationfrom curing meats to preserving vegetables and treating wounds.

Today, salt has shifted from a privilege to a daily staple, where almost every recipe ends with "add salt to taste." But what exactly is "to taste"? The tongue has five flavor receptors: sour (hydrogen ions), sweet (carbohydrates), bitter (amino acids and other compounds), umami (glutamate), and salty (sodium chloride). Each person has a different sensitivity to flavors; however, these receptors can become desensitized over time, requiring more "activator" to trigger a signal to the brain.



Cardiovascular diseases and their link to diet represent a key area for preventive medicine. Excessive consumption of sodium chloride (table salt) is a leading cause of hypertension, kidney disease, and cardiovascular events due to microvascular inflammation, increased oxidative stress, and the remodeling of organs like the heart and kidneys (Smyth).

The Current Landscape: The human body requires approximately 500 mg of sodium per day (about 1/4 teaspoon of salt) for basic functions. However, the average intake in the U.S. is approximately 3,300 mg per day (Farquhar). The 2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend adults consume less than 2,300 mg per day. For populations with hypertension, the American Heart Association (AHA) recommends a limit of 1,500 mg. The World Health Organization (WHO) suggests a maximum of 2,000 mg (about 5 grams of salt) to reduce cardiovascular incidents.

Sources:

Shake it or skip it? Here's expert advice on salt. https://www.heart.org/en/news/2024/07/17/shake-it-or-skip-it-heres-expert-advice-on-salt

Farquhar, William B. "Dietary sodium and health: more than just blood pressure." Journal of the American College of Cardiology, vol. 65, no. 10, 2015, pp. 1042-1050. doi, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25766952/

Smyth, Andrew. "Sodium Intake and Renal Outcomes: A Systematic Review." American Journal of Hypertension, vol. 27, no. 10, 2014, pp. 1277-1284, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24510182/



This month at Bite of HOPE, we want to provide everyone with evidence-based alternatives to make reducing salt intake more manageable and simple:

-Incorporate plant-based seasonings rich in anti-inflammatory properties, such as turmeric, ginger, garlic, rosemary, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, oregano, and others.

-Focus on neural recalibration of taste perception and how we can reduce our need for salt by incorporating spicy flavors into our meals.

- ***The process***: If we gradually reduce salt, within about **2 to 4 weeks** the brain "recalibrates" its taste receptors.
- ***The result:*** Foods that once tasted bland begin to taste intense and delicious again. The brain starts detecting the natural flavors of foods!

-Finally, raise awareness about hidden sources of sodium in packaged and ultra-processed foods, which can account for up to 70% of the sodium in our diet.



Food of the Month: Basil

Basil doesn't just provide a fresh aroma; it's a perfect ally for reducing sodium. Using it as a natural seasoning enhances flavors without needing salt. It contains antioxidants that strengthen the immune system and support overall health.

AHA Insight: "One of the best qualities of herbs and spices is the variety of flavors you can add to foods without adding salt."

The American Heart Association provides evidence-based information on how to use herbs and spices to season foods without salt and reduce sodium intake:
https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/cooking-skills/preparing/common-herbs-and-spices-how-to-use-them-deliciously

The idea is that spices and herbs offer a wide range of flavor profiles—from sweet and spicy to earthy and aromatic—without adding sodium, which is useful for maintaining taste while cooking with less salt.

An effective strategy to reduce sodium without sacrificing flavor is to use natural seasonings, according to the American Heart Association.

American Heart Association.

NATION OF LIFESAVERS American Heart Association

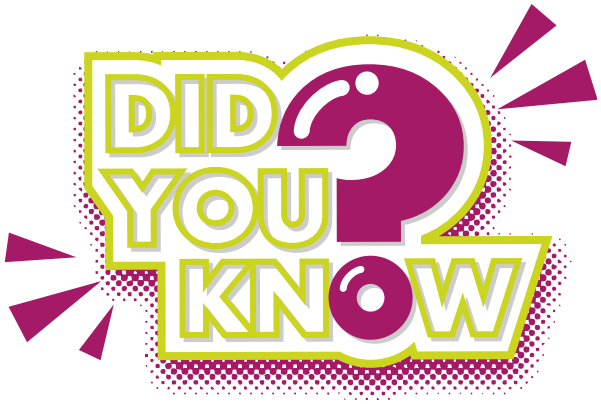
"One of the best qualities of herbs and spices is the variety of flavors you can add to foods *without adding salt." (www.heart.org)
https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/how-to-reduce-sodium



Where is Sodium Hiding?

Many foods that don't taste "salty" are high in sodium:

- Bread and tortillas
- Cereals
- Sauces and dressings
- Canned soups
- Deli meats and processed cheeses
- Frozen meals and packaged snacks



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size
Serving Pen Container

Amount per serving		
Calories	**Calories from Fat**	
		% Daily Value*
Total Fat		
Saturated Fat	0 g	0 %
Trans Fat	0 g	0 %
Cholesterol	0 g	0 %
Sodium	0 g	0 %
Total Carbohydrate	0 g	0 %
Dietary Fiber	0 g	0 %
Sugar	0 g	0 %
Protein	0 g	0 %
Vitamin A 0 %	**Vitamin C** 0 %	
Calcium 0 %	**Iron** 0 %	

*Percent Daily values are based on 2,000 calories diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calories needs.

Learn to Read the Label:

Check the **Nutrition Facts:**

- Sodium (mg)
- % Daily Value (DV)

Quick Guide

- 5% or less = low in sodium
- 20% or more = high in sodium

Pro tip: Compare brands; there can be huge differences between similar products.

How to Reduce Sodium Without Losing Flavor

This is where culinary creativity comes in. Replace salt with:

- Fresh herbs
- Spices
- Garlic and onion
- Lemon and vinegars
- Natural mustard
- Pepper, paprika, cumin
- Salt-free spice blends

The key is not to remove flavor, but to build flavor in a different way.

Recipe of the Month

Bite of HOPE
A HOPE CLINIC INITIATIVE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium spaghetti squash
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes
- 1 block of goat cheese
- 4-6 cloves of garlic, minced
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 handful fresh basil (freshly chopped)

PREPARATION

The pasta

- Cut squash in half, remove seeds, and bake face down at 400°F for 40 minutes.
- Scrape the inside with a fork to form "spaghetti" strands.



The sauce

- Place the goat cheese in the center of a baking dish, surrounded by tomatoes and garlic.
- Drizzle with olive oil and oregano.
- Bake at 400°F for 1 hour.

The Final Touch:

- Mash the tomatoes and cheese with a fork and mix vigorously until creamy.
- Add the freshly chopped basil to the hot mixture so the residual heat releases the oils without wilting it.
- Toss in the squash strands and serve immediately.

Creamy Spaghetti Squash with Tomato & Goat Cheese

Bite of HOPE Community

If you would like to learn more about these topics and be part of a health-focused community, we invite you to join our Bite of HOPE group! Participate in our monthly meetings to stay up to date with our activities and gain access to the exclusive educational materials we actively create. We look forward to seeing you soon!



Our nutrition talks continue!

We're excited to announce that we will be hosting educational talks on healthy eating every month. These sessions are perfect for learning practical tips to improve your health and your family's well-being — and they are completely free! Don't miss the next session.

Next Talk – April

Carbohydrates & Glycemic Index:
Learn to control blood sugar spikes by choosing complex carbs and understanding the order of food intake.

Support Our Alumni Entrepreneurs

Did you know many Bite of HOPE alumni run their own food businesses? From catering to desserts, and healthy, delicious options, our graduates are bringing their culinary skills to the real world.

We invite you to check out our Alumni Directory and explore the options. Supporting these businesses means enjoying amazing products and helping our community thrive.



CLICK HERE for BiteofHOPEDirectoryBook!

WhatsApp

Scan this QR Code using the camera to join this group!

Conciencia Nutricional 2026
WhatsApp group

Connect with us!

Want to learn how to make nutritious and flavorful meals? Discover our programs and become part of the Bite of HOPE community:

🌐 Website https://abiteofhope.org/
📸 Instagram @abiteofhope
📞 Contact 713-773-0803 ext: 1140 o 1187

A special thank you to our sponsors for making this vision a reality.

HOPE CLINIC
a community health center

cities for better health

HOUSTON Methodist®
LEADING MEDICINE