

Slash the Salt

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

When you hear the words *salt* and *sodium*, you may immediately think about the salt shaker on your table. Maybe you use it before your meal to enhance the flavor of your food, or perhaps you add a dash while cooking. It may surprise you to learn that just 11% of your sodium intake comes from the salt you cook with or add at the table.

Most of the sodium Americans consume (71%) comes from ultra-processed, packaged and restaurant food. Salt is in pizza, bread, burgers, deli meat, chips, pretzels, pickles and condiments, to name a few. These foods are high in sodium because it's used in so many ways — to prevent spoilage, prohibit growth of pathogens, improve appearance and enhance flavor or texture.

If you've been told to cut back on salt for health reasons, such as salt-sensitive hypertension or kidney disease, it's not just about avoiding the salt shaker. Your best bet is to eat fewer ultra-processed foods.

You don't need to banish salt from your diet, since at least 1,500 mg sodium per day is required for normal body functioning. The trouble is, many people get too much (about 3,400 mg per day).

You can still cook with salt, but try to cut back on using very salty sauces and dressings, such as soy or barbeque sauce. Instead, boost flavor with citrus fruits, such as lemon or lime; herbs, such as basil, oregano and rosemary; spices, such as cumin, cinnamon and coriander; or aromatics, including garlic, onion and ginger.



Checklist: Your Heart's Must-Haves

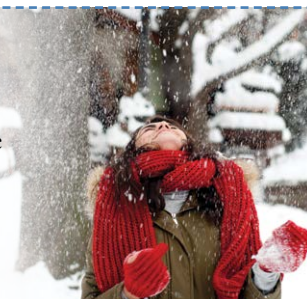
What are the key elements that can help protect your heart? Check the following habits that you typically observe or hope to develop for heart health. Then start watching your progress.



- ☐ **Waistline:** I keep my waist circumference below 35 inches (for women) or below 40 inches (for men). Excess belly fat raises heart disease risk.
- ☐ **Power moves:** I stay physically active and get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise weekly. Examples: routine brisk walks, a dance class or cardio machine workouts.
- ☐ **Numbers game:** I know my blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose and triglyceride levels through regular checks by my health care provider. Maintaining optimal levels is critical to heart health.
- ☐ **Positive food:** I enjoy a diet rich in fresh produce, whole grains and lean protein sources (fish, beans, lean meats) to help fight arterial disease and unwanted weight gain.
- ☐ **Yes for nutrition:** I rarely eat refined grains or processed foods. These products (e.g., low-fiber, high-sugar foods and preserved meats) remove many healthful components in the original food sources.
- ☐ **I don't smoke.** Smoking significantly raises the risk of heart disease and diabetes by damaging the blood vessels and raising blood pressure and heart rate.
- ☐ **I laugh a lot.** It feels good and relieves stress and depression. Laughter helps lower stress hormones and artery inflammation and increase HDL (good) cholesterol, says the American Heart Association.

It's never too late to be heart smart for you and your family.

February 1 is Wear Red Day honoring women's heart health. Heart disease kills more women than all forms of cancer combined. Most women who die suddenly from heart disease will have no prior symptoms. But 80% of cardiac events may be prevented with health education and lifestyle changes to manage your vital signs.



Active at 50+



We all know people who seem younger than their years. Chances are they do more, move more and have more energy than others the same age. Science has shown that the more physically active we are throughout life the less biological aging takes place in our bodies.

Benefits: Exercising and staying physically active helps protect your heart, muscle strength, joint flexibility and mental function. Plus, exercise helps control weight and keeps your body youthful. Many studies have shown that we may live longer when we stay active.

Exercise Guidelines for Adults:

To protect longevity, your **weekly** exercise target should be at least:

- 1 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (e.g., brisk walking).
- 2 Or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (e.g., cross training).
- 3 Or a combination of both.
- 4 And 2 or 3 muscle-strengthening workouts.

(Children and teens should do at **least 60 minutes** of physical activity daily.)

People who followed these exercise guidelines — starting as late as age 60 — lowered their risk of heart failure by 12% to 31% based on a long-running study reported in *Circulation* this year.

Ask yourself: Do you hope for good health with each passing decade? As much as possible, get up, get moving and enjoy living.

Save a Life With CPR

If you see another adult suddenly collapse, you can save that person's life by immediately performing **hands-only** (no breaths) cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). This method uses only compressions to perform CPR. People who receive hands-only CPR are twice as likely to survive as those who do not.

Here's how to do hands-only CPR:*

1. **Call 9-1-1.** (If others are with you, have 1 of them call while you begin chest compressions.) You will be asked to place the phone on speaker so the emergency dispatcher can help you and any other bystanders check the person's breathing, get the precise location and provide instructions, including:
2. **Kneeling** close to the person's chest, place the heel of 1 hand over the other in the middle of the chest.
3. **Extend** your arms completely and push down hard at a 90-degree angle (that's 1 compression).
4. **After** the push, completely release your pressure.
5. **Aim** for 100 or more compressions per minute. When you tire, try to switch with someone nearby (if possible) to get a break.

***Note:** Experts caution that for drowning victims or people deprived of oxygen, rescue breaths are still necessary.



It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop. — Confucius

Go compost.

Food scraps and yard waste account for 30% of our garbage, but we can compost it instead. Consider composting at home.

Start with a bin. Then research the basics of layering greens (high nitrogen), such as vegetable scraps and coffee grounds, and browns (high carbon), such as dry leaves, sawdust and wood chips, in the bin. The benefits? Reduce food waste and use the compost as mulch in your garden.



Q: Cautions for OTC medications?

A: Many people assume over-the-counter medications are safe, but they can have side effects or interactions. This is especially true when taking multiple OTC meds or using them with prescription drugs.

Read the drug label. Check the ingredients, uses and warnings such as not to mix with alcohol. Carefully follow product directions.

Avoid multiple sources. Make sure you're not getting the same drug from more than 1 product. For instance, acetaminophen commonly occurs in painkillers and cold or flu remedies. You could easily get too much if you take more than 1 acetaminophen product at the same time. The same is true for all other active ingredients such as decongestants.

If you have any medication questions, ask your health care provider or pharmacist. Have your provider monitor all of your prescription and OTC medicines. — Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, American Heart Association's Life's Simple 7, is at personalbest.com/extras/19V2tools.

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