The average person eats around 3.4 grams of salt per day, but the recommended quantity for a healthy person is between 1.5 - 2.3 grams a day. This is equivalent to about one teaspoon a day. Most people consume double what they need in terms of salt.

If you are struggling with high blood pressure, the daily recommended intake of salt is less than 1.5 grams per day.

Salt in excess can increase blood pressure in those who have hypertension (high blood pressure). It can make the body retain fluids, which may cause swelling in susceptible individuals. Salty foods tend to also be high in fat and calories, leading to excess calorie intake, overweight and obesity. Over a period of time, the excess water retention and resultant high blood pressure will lead to kidney disease, which can eventually cause kidney failure.

Salt is not always bad, but plays several very essential roles in the body. Salt (or sodium) is an essential nutrient but the body cannot produce it, so it has to be taken in from outside sources. Salt plays a vital role in many bodily functions. For example, it is the critical nutrient that has an essential role in keeping our bodies hydrated. It will also cause water to be retained when your blood pressure is too low and it will facilitate excretion and therefore water loss, when blood pressure is too high.

Salt causes excretion of water via perspiration when the body needs to be cooled down after exercise or when we have spend too many hours in the hot sun. So salt in itself is not bad, it is the excess consumption of salt that is bad.

Like with sugar, the best way to avoid excess salt is to read the nutritional labels of all the food you purchase. You will be shocked to find out how much hidden salt food contains to provide flavour. Try to avoid processed and fast foods. These types of foods are usually expensive, do not contain the nutrients required and is loaded with salt, sugar and fat. Concentrate on buying whole, fresh foods that are much more filling and contain essential nutrients without negatively impacting your health.

Limiting our total daily salt intake is difficult, because 75% of salt comes from the food we eat such as processed or prepared foods, and not just the salt we add at the table. Foods such as breads and cereals sometimes contain high amounts of salt.

- An added problem is that salt is very tasty, just like sugar. The combination of salt, sugar and fat is unbelievably tasty. So we develop a taste for these foods from a young age and therefore crave the taste for the rest of our lives.
- Ask any kid to choose between a packet of crisps or an apple - very few will choose the nutritious fruit.
- Usually the quantity of salt that is in everything we eat, is far beyond the normal daily requirement.

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Somehow that ruins the whole meal for you and honestly most people ignore the warning and continue adding salt for flavour when ever they cook. Truth is, excess salt is indeed bad for your health.
Bland food is tasteless and although you have good intensions to start off with, you will soon decide to go back to the tasty, bad food with excess salt. The trick is to replace the salt with other strong flavours like herbs and spices. Good examples are cumin, cayenne, paprika, black pepper, oregano, lemon peel, garlic and onion powder, and rubbed sage. Spice blends like masala, cinnamon and lemon juice are all good alternatives.

CONCLUSION

- Adding salt to food is not just unnecessary, it is also very unhealthy.
- Getting used to no added salt is possible.
- It will take your taste buds around 2 weeks to get used to the new tastes, so stick to the plan and try to prepare food at home, without any added salt until you start to really enjoy the taste of good, wholesome, fresh and healthy meals.
- You will soon feel more energetic, your blood pressure might drop and you will feel much better!

MAKE FOOD TASTY WITHOUT SALT
The information provided in this article is for education purposes only and does not serve as a medical diagnosis. Members should always consult their healthcare provider with serious symptoms.

Please note that Heritage Health plans do not necessarily cover the costs of the condition/s described.