



Healthy Diets Improve Health Unhealthy Diets Linked to Disease

Notice Our New Look?!

We hope this colorful new look will inspire you to take (or keep taking) an active role in your healthcare. Rest assured, we'll still provide the same trustworthy information to help you make important decisions about your health. Let us know how KnovaSolutions can help!

Most of us know that healthy diets are important for health. They nourish and protect us against disease. In fact, unhealthy diets are linked to almost half of heart disease, stroke and diabetes deaths according to a [study](#) in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Of the 702,308 U.S. adults who died from heart disease, stroke and diabetes, 45% of the deaths were associated with eating too few healthy foods and eating too many unhealthy ones. The top cause of death in this group was from consuming too much salt. About 70% of the salt the typical American eats comes from foods like bread, pizza, cold cuts, cured meats, soups, burritos, tacos, chips and cheese. Eating too much processed meat and drinking too many sugary drinks were right behind salt, as well as not eating enough nuts and seeds, fish, vegetables, fruits, whole grains and "good" fats.

It's not just these conditions that can be triggered or worsened by eating a poor diet. Cancer, gout, Alzheimer's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, obesity, chronic pain and kidney disease are among conditions linked to poor eating habits.

The Low Down

Table salt is a combination of two minerals, sodium and chloride. Our nerves and muscles need some

sodium to function properly; it also helps keep the right balance of fluids in the body. But if our body has more sodium than the kidneys can process, it builds up. This can lead to high blood pressure, which can lead to other health concerns. Nutritionists recommend that we eat less than a teaspoon (2,300 mg) of salt a day, and those who are sensitive should eat less.

Most of the sodium in the typical diet comes from processed food. That doesn't make all processed foods unhealthy though. Practically all the foods we eat are processed, that is, changed, prepared or packaged, in some way. However, there is a big difference between minimally processed and highly processed foods.

Minimal processes like cleaning vegetables and vacuum packing meats are done to increase food safety and to keep them fresher. Canned tomatoes, frozen fruit and vegetables, and canned tuna are processed at their peak to retain their nutritional value. Even pressing olives to get olive oil (one of the healthiest of ingredients) is a form of processing.

On the other hand, highly processed or ultra-processed foods undergo several steps. Ingredients like sweeteners, salt, oils, artificial colors, flavors and chemical pre-



Decoding Food Labels

The longer the list of ingredients, the more processed a food is. Watch for these ingredients:

Sugar can be listed as honey, high-fructose corn syrup, agave nectar, dextrose, malt syrup and molasses. The American Heart Association recommends that women not exceed 100 calories (25 grams) and men 150 calories (37.5 grams) of added sugar a day.

Other words for salt include monosodium glutamate and disodium phosphate. Notice how many milligrams of sodium are in a serving. Remember not to exceed 2,300 mg a day.

Saturated and trans fats may be listed as butter, margarine, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, shortening, palm oil and lard. If you eat 2,000 calories a day, it's recommended that you get 44 to 78 grams of fat per day. Of that, saturated fat should be no more than 22 grams.

Preservatives like ascorbic acid, sodium benzoate, potassium sorbate and tocopherols prevent spoilage. Emulsifiers such as soy lecithin and monoglycerides prevent separation of liquids and solids. Thickeners such as xanthan gum, pectin, carrageenan, guar gum add texture. Colors can be added to make a food more pleasing like artificial FD&C Yellow No. 6 or natural beta-carotene.

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servatives are added. Processed meats (hot dogs, bacon, ham, sausage, pepperoni, beef jerky and deli meats) are preserved by smoking, curing or salting, or by adding chemicals. Nitrates and nitrites are chemicals added to keep processed meats fresher longer. Eating red meat and processed meat are associated with [colorectal](#) cancer.

Refined or processed carbohydrates include white bread, white rice, low-fiber cereals, some crackers, chips and packaged baked goods. Processing the grains used to make these items removes their nutritional benefit and often involves adding trans fats, salt and/or sugars. These foods cause blood sugar levels to spike and then fall, leaving us feeling tired. Sugary drinks (soda, fruit drinks and sports beverages) can do the same. Plus, they can add as many calories as a meal without offering any nutrients. A 12 ounce can of soda equals 10 teaspoons of sugar! Drinking empty calories (calories without nutrients) can cause weight gain and increase the risk of developing diabetes.

Ok, Got It!

Since you know the dangers of highly processed, salty and sugary foods, let's focus on healthier options! Think of your changes as adding certain foods, not just cutting back on others. Since no single food will make you magically healthy, try to build your overall diet around real foods, fresh from the ground, ocean or farm. Eat more:

- Healthy fats like olives and olive oil, fish oil (from salmon, trout, sardines, albacore tuna), avocado, raw nuts (walnuts, pecans, almonds) and flaxseeds. Avoid: fried food, fast food and processed snack foods.
- Colorful fruits and vegetables, fresh or frozen. Shoot for 7-9 servings per day. An apple, bana-

na, 1/2 cup cooked vegetables and 1 cup of greens count as a serving. Avoid: packaged fruits and vegetables with added sugar and salt.

- Fiber-rich foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods (breads, cereals and pasta made from whole grains or legumes). Legumes (beans, peas, lentils) are members of the vegetable family. Avoid: white or egg breads, sugary cereals, white rice and pasta made with white flour.
- High quality protein like chicken, fish, tofu, legumes and eggs. Try adding more plant protein, for example, split pea soup, stir-fried tofu, and bean salads. Avoid: processed meats and red meat (if you do eat it, chose lean cuts and have it no more than once a week).
- Low-fat or non-fat dairy products if dairy is part of your diet (some people are sensitive to it). Skim or 1% milk, non-fat yogurt, low or non-fat cottage cheese and reduced fat cheeses are the best options. Avoid whole milk/cheeses and processed cheese.

If you're wondering how to make these changes, here are some ideas. Read food labels (see box) so you know what you're getting. Consider growing fruits and vegetables. A container works in very limited space and is a fun way to grow some food, even if it's only a tomato plant or herbs. Cook more meals at home so you can control what gets added. If you're short on time, buy pre-cut vegetables and fruit; they can be added to a meal or taken to work as a snack. While you're working on adding healthy foods, try to replace sugary drinks with water.

We'd like to help you adopt a healthy diet! Give KnovaSolutions a call at **800/355-0885**, Monday to Friday, 8 am-8 pm, Mountain Time.