

Reduce salt to improve heart health

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Those with high blood pressure or who are at risk may want to consider simply saying no to sodium. Dr. Amy Pollak, a Mayo Clinic cardiologist, says 75% of the amount of salt you get in your day-to-day diet is from processed foods or going out to eat.

A new study found that cutting [salt intake](#) not only reduced blood pressure in patients with existing hypertension, but it did so for those who were not yet at risk. The study also showed that the more salt you take out of your diet, the greater the fall in blood pressure.

These tiny granules can make our food taste so good, and too much can raise our blood pressure too high.

"Having [high blood pressure](#) is a major risk for [heart attack](#), for stroke, for heart failure," even for things like dementia," says Dr. Pollak.

Reducing salt at the dinner table or when going out to eat can reduce our blood pressure by up to 10 points.

"If you go out to eat and someone is preparing your food, just ask them, 'Hey, don't add any salt to my food, please,'" says Dr. Pollak.

And when cooking, try more herbs and spices to replace salt.

"It takes a while to reset your taste buds to get used to that lower-salt diet, but you can really make up for any flavor deficits by using more spices or more herbs."

Maintaining a healthy weight or losing weight can help lower blood pressure.

"Certainly, some people can have a more dramatic effect on [blood pressure](#) with weight loss, but where you can see the most bang for your buck is really in the low-salt diet," says Dr. Pollak.

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