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SALT VS. SODIUM. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

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"Salt" and "sodium" are frequently used exchangeably, but are they the same?...


The short answer is "not exactly".

Sodium is a mineral - one of the most abundant minerals on the planet. Salt, chemically speaking, is a compound made up of 2 minerals: sodium and chloride, called sodium chloride.

In other words, sodium is an integral part of salt.

Sodium is extremely important for the body: it helps muscles and nerves to function properly and it helps with fluid balance in the body.

But Americans are getting way too much sodium from their diets. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend no more than 2300 mg of sodium per day; American Heart Association recommends limiting sodium to 1500 mg per day or less*; but an average American consumes 3500 mg of sodium per day. To put it in context, that's 7 times more than what body needs to function properly.



But if you think "Oh, I will just stop adding salt to my dishes" you are still in trouble. Yes, it will help, but a sprinkle of salt in a home-made soup isn't the biggest problem: nearly three quarters of sodium that Americans eat (71% to be exact) come from packaged/processed foods and restaurant meals. Sodium is not only present in our familiar table salt (sodium chloride), but it can hide additives and preservatives like sodium benzoate, sodium nitrate, or sodium phosphate.

So, What Can You Do?

- Reduce restaurant/take out foods.
- Reduce or skip packaged/processed /prepared foods as much as you can.
- Increase whole, unprocessed foods, especially vegetables, fruits, beans, lean meats and fish.
- Buy unsalted nuts (or buy a package of salted and a package of unsalted nuts and mix them in one bowl)
- Use herbs and spices to season, be careful with "spice mixes" and "seasoning packages" as they may contain salt.
- Make your own salad dressing.

The Quickest, Simplest Salad Dressing

1 part of extra virgin olive oil

1 part of 100% orange OR 100% carrot juice

Mix well, pour over salad, toss well and enjoy

*The recommendation of 1500 mg or less may not apply to everyone: if you are working physically and/or in hot conditions (you are a firefighter for example), if you are outside a lot if or you are an athlete, you may need more, and sometimes much more sodium than mentioned 1500 mg/day. Certain medical conditions require higher sodium intake as well, so make sure to talk to your health professional.

Please contact us to schedule an appointment or to learn more.
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