

*Welcome to
Brooksville Healthcare's
Dietary Department*



Lower Salt and Sodium: A Key to Good Health

Introduction

We owe a lot to salt. The search for this white crystal and the trade that sprang up around it helped shape some civilizations. Salt was essential to preserve foods, both vegetables and meats, through the winter and during travel. It has given us words like salary and salacious. It has also been a source of conflict, and even bloodshed, as tribes and nations fought for access to salt or guarded their stores.



Tasting Success with Cutting Salt: Science-based strategies and culinary insights from the HSPH Dept. of Nutrition and The Culinary Institute of America on how to preserve flavor and cut back on salt

Delicious Recipes that Spare the Salt: Fourteen lower-sodium recipes from The Culinary Institute of America that use herbs, spices, and culinary techniques to boost flavor

Leveling the Playing Field on Salt: Why the Institute of Medicine recommends that the U.S. regulate the amount of salt in commercially prepared foods

The Case for Sodium Reduction: Questions and expert answers about how salt affects health, the myth of salt sensitivity, and why salt reduction doesn't mean eating bland food

Flawed Science on Sodium from JAMA: A new study would have you believe that low-salt diets raise your risk of dying from heart disease—and its conclusions are most certainly wrong

Salt and Heart Disease: A closer look at three key studies that show the harmful effects of sodium on the heart

Salt Substitutes: Seasonings that will help you skip the salt

Make 1500 Milligrams Your Daily Sodium Budget: Download this PDF handout on why and how to cut back on salt

More recently, even though salt is cheap and abundant, it has sparked fierce battles, only they have been bloodless ones fought in the pages of medical journals and in the halls of government, debated in blogs and on television news. Salt has been the subject of so much scrutiny that some have dubbed 2010 "the year of salt."

The issue is this: How can we get people to eat less salt?

There's little question that we all eat far too much salt—and our excessive intake of salt has negative effects on health. Americans consume one-and-a-half or more teaspoons of salt a day. We aren't alone—studies in dozens of countries have found that adults typically take in the equivalent of more than a teaspoon of salt a day, and more than two teaspoons a day in some Asian countries. That's far more than is needed to satisfy the body's need for sodium, the main element we get from salt.

Current U.S. recommendations call for a maximum of one teaspoon of salt (2,300 milligrams of sodium) a day, and two-thirds of a teaspoon (1,500 milligrams of sodium) for people who have high blood pressure or are at high risk of developing it. The latter group includes people who are over the age of 40, are African American, or have somewhat elevated blood pressure (pre-hypertension)—which encompasses almost 70 percent of adults in the United States! People with diabetes, kidney disease, heart failure and other conditions should cut back, too.

Many experts, including those in the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health, the American Heart Association, and the Center for Science in the Public Interest, believe that cutting back on salt—aiming for a target of 1,500 milligrams of sodium per person per day—would improve health, save lives, and avoid billions of dollars each year in medical costs. Skeptics say that an across-the-board reduction in salt intake would disrupt the food industry but have little impact on public health. Fifteen years ago, there was more room for debate about the benefits of large-scale cutbacks on salt. (Read more about the [feud over salt](#).) During the past decade, however, extensive research on the health effects of excess salt clearly points to evidence of harm.

The big challenge, then, is how to cut back. Most of our salt comes from prepared foods, like ready-made breads and crackers, canned and frozen foods, ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, cheese, and restaurant foods. Reducing our intake would mean a huge change in how the food industry prepares its products, a challenge for food producers and a change the salt industry isn't keen to make. After all, salt is a cheap additive that enhances flavor and livens up bland food. It makes meat retain water, adding weight for which we pay top dollar. Salt also makes us thirsty, and is one way the food industry nudges us to buy more soft drinks.

Encouragingly, many food companies have already shown that it is possible to make modest, even significant cutbacks in sodium without sacrificing taste. Others have pledged to do so, on their own or in conjunction with New York City's nationwide voluntary campaign to cut salt levels in the food supply by 25 percent over the next five years. But it remains to be seen whether all parts of the food industry will as easily—or willingly—embrace sodium cutbacks without new federal leadership. Indeed, a committee appointed by the Institute of Medicine has recommended that the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulate the amount of salt in commercially prepared food

Chicken Burgers

Wonderful healthy chicken burgers with a homemade basil pesto, mozzarella and all the toppings your heart desires! Grill them up and chow down!

INGREDIENTS

For the pesto:

- 3 cups organic spinach
- 5 large basil leaves
- juice from 1 large lemon
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon pine nuts or roasted almonds
- 2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese (or Go Veggie Dairy Free Parmesan)
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1 tablespoon water, to thin pesto
- Freshly ground salt and pepper, to taste



For the burgers:

- 1 pound ground chicken thighs (or you can use 95% lean ground chicken)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 4 slices Go Veggie Lactose Free Mozzarella slices
- 4 whole grain, gluten free buns or lettuce wraps
- For burgers: tomato slices, onion slices, avocado slices and buns of choice

INSTRUCTIONS

1. First make the pesto: Add spinach, basil, lemon, olive oil, nuts, parmesan cheese and garlic to the bowl of a food processor or high-powered blender. Process until smooth. Add 1 tablespoon of water to thin pesto if necessary. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

2. Preheat grill to medium high heat. Lightly oil grill grate. In a large bowl, add the ground chicken, 2 tablespoons of pesto, 1/4 teaspoon of salt and pepper. Use your hands to mix the ingredients together and form into 4 patties. Place burgers on the grill and cook for 5-7 minutes per side or until done. Top with cheese and grill 1 minute longer or until cheese is melted.

3. Serve each burger in a bun or lettuce wrap and top with 1 tablespoon of pesto, plus any additional toppings you might like such as avocado, onion or tomato.