

Sodium surplus: Shake the habit

You have been trying to eat less sodium just a pinch of table salt to your baked potato and a dash to your scrambled eggs.

But a pinch and a dash can quickly add up to unhealthy levels of sodium, especially when many foods already contain more than enough sodium. About 11 percent of the sodium in the average person's diet comes from adding salt or other sodium-containing condiments to foods while cooking or eating. But the majority of the sodium 77 percent comes from eating prepared or processed foods that contain the mineral.

So even though you may limit salt that you add to food, the food itself may already be high in sodium. To lower your sodium intake, find out how much sodium you really need, what high-sodium foods to avoid, and ways to prepare and serve foods without added salt or sodium.

Sodium: Essential in small amounts

Your body needs some sodium to function properly. Sodium -

- Helps maintain the right balance of fluids in your body
- Helps transmit nerve impulses
- Influences the contraction and relaxation of muscles

Your kidneys regulate the amount of sodium kept in your body. When sodium levels are low, your kidneys conserve sodium. When levels are high, they excrete the excess amount in urine.

If your kidneys cannot eliminate enough sodium, the sodium starts to accumulate in your blood. Because sodium attracts and holds water, your

blood volume increases. Increased blood volume, in turn, makes your heart work harder to move more blood through your blood vessels, increasing pressure in your arteries. Congestive heart failure, cirrhosis and chronic kidney disease can all lead to an inability to regulate sodium.

Some people are more sensitive to the effects of sodium than are others. People who are sodium-sensitive retain sodium more easily, leading to excess fluid retention and increased blood pressure. If you are in that group, extra sodium in your diet increases your chance of developing high blood pressure, a condition that can lead to cardiovascular and kidney diseases.

How much sodium do you need?

Various organisations have published recommendations for daily sodium intake. Most recommend between 1,500 and 2,400 mg a day for healthy adults. A lower sodium intake has a more beneficial effect on blood pressure.

If you are older than 50, black, or if you have a health condition such as high blood pressure, chronic kidney disease or diabetes, you may be more sensitive to the blood-pressure-raising effects of sodium. As a result, aim for a sodium intake at the low end of the range recommended for healthy adults. Talk to your doctor about the sodium limit that is best for you.

Three main sources of sodium

Our average diet has three main sources of sodium -



Processed and prepared foods:

Most sodium in a person's diet comes from eating processed and prepared foods, such as canned vegetables, soups, luncheon meats, frozen foods and commercial baked goods. Food manufacturers use salt or other sodium-containing compounds to preserve food and to improve the taste and texture of food.

Natural sources of sodium: Sodium occurs in some foods naturally. For example, 1 cup of low-fat milk has about 125 mg of sodium. These natural sources, which include meat, poultry, dairy products and vegetables, account for 12 percent of sodium consumed in an average diet.

Sodium-containing condiments: One teaspoon of table salt has 2,300 mg of sodium nearly as much as the upper end of the recommended total daily amount. One tablespoon of soy sauce has 914 mg of sodium. Adding these or other sodium-

laden condiments to your meals either while cooking or at the table raises the sodium count of food. Sauces, dressings, seasoning salts and marinades often have high amounts of sodium.

Whether food comes by its sodium naturally or not, your daily intake can add up quickly when you tally the sodium from all of your meals and snacks.

How to slash your sodium intake

You may or may not be sensitive to the effects of sodium. And there is no way to know who might develop high blood pressure as a result of a high-sodium diet. There is no reason to consume a lot of sodium, so choose and prepare foods with less sodium.

You can control your sodium intake several ways:

- Eat more fresh foods and fewer processed foods. Fresh foods usually have less sodium than

processed ones. Most fresh fruits and vegetables are naturally low in sodium. Canned vegetables and vegetable juices, such as tomato juice, usually have added salt. Fresh meat is lower in sodium than luncheon meat, bacon, hot dogs, sausage and ham.

- Choose lower sodium products. If you do buy processed foods, select those that have reduced sodium. You can usually buy low-sodium versions of soups, broths, canned vegetables and vegetable juices, processed lean meats, ketchup, and soy sauce. Check the Nutrition Facts label for sodium amounts.

- Remove salt from recipes whenever possible. You can leave out the salt in many recipes, including casseroles, stews and other main dishes. Baked goods are an exception. Leaving out the salt could affect the quality as well as the taste of the food.

- Limit your use of sodium-laden condiments. Salad dressings, sauces, dips, ketchup, mustard and relish all contain sodium. Pickles and olives, in particular, contain high amounts of sodium one small pickle has 474 mg of sodium, and five green olives have about 235 mg of sodium.

- Use herbs, spices and other flavorings to enhance foods. Do not reach for the salt shaker first. Learn how to use fresh or dried herbs, spices, zest from citrus fruit and fruit juices to jazz up your meals. For example, use the zest the outermost layer of a citrus fruit's peel from lemons or limes to liven up your salads and soups. Use table wine cooking wine to add sodium-free vinegary, lemon juice or flavoring extracts to add an extra kick to

your recipes. Experiment with new combinations and flavors.

Use salt substitutes wisely. Some salt substitutes or light salts contain a mixture of table salt (sodium chloride) and other compounds. To achieve that familiar salty taste, you may use too much of the substitute and actually not reduce your sodium intake. In addition, many salt substitutes contain potassium chloride. Too much potassium can be harmful if you have kidney problems or if you are taking medications that retain potassium for treatment of congestive heart failure or high blood pressure. A better option in these cases may be to use salt-free seasoning blends or herb-spice blends instead of salt or salt substitutes.

Your taste for salt is acquired, so it is reversible. To unlearn this salty savoring, decrease your use of salt gradually and your taste buds will adjust. Most people find that a few weeks after slashing their salt intake they no longer miss it. Start by using no more than 1/4 teaspoon of added salt daily, then gradually reduce to no salt add-ons. As you use less salt, your preference for it lessens, allowing you to enjoy the taste of food itself.

Sodium is an essential mineral, but most people get far more than they need each day. So do not automatically reach for the salt shaker. Rather, learn how to select and prepare foods with lower levels of sodium. With a dash of common sense and a pinch of prudence, you can shake your salt habit.

Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.com>

Cholesterol-lowering drugs cut glaucoma risk

Cholesterol-lowering drugs such as statins appear to reduce the risk of developing the most common type of glaucoma, a leading cause of blindness, researchers found.

Statins, which are prescribed for heart patients to reduce how much cholesterol the body makes, have previously been shown to cut the risk of age-related macular degeneration, a condition that affects the eye's retina that is the leading cause of blindness.

The latest study, published in the June issue of The Archives of Ophthalmology, compared a group of men over age 50 diagnosed with glaucoma with a group that had not been diagnosed and found a significant reduction in risk when cholesterol-fighting drugs had been used over a long period.

The drugs were found to reduce the incidence of

open-angle glaucoma, in which the eye's drainage canals become clogged and pressure builds in the eyeball, causing damage to the optic nerve.

Glaucoma robs people of sight with little warning and, while it can be treated with medications and surgery in early stages, there is no cure once blindness sets in.

All types of cholesterol-lowering drugs, including statins, appeared to help reduce the incidence of open-angle glaucoma, said study author Gerald McGwin of the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Recent research has also indicated long-term use of statins may also prevent various forms of cancer, including prostate and colon cancer, though the drugs have not been approved for such use.

Source: <http://www.reuters.com>

Vitamin C rich diet may cut arthritis risk

Consumption of foods high in vitamin C appears to protect against inflammatory polyarthritis, a form of rheumatoid arthritis involving two or more joints, new research suggests.

The findings, which appear in the Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases, stem from a study of more than 20,000 subjects who kept diet diaries and were arthritis-free when the study began. The analysis focused on 73 subjects who developed inflammatory polyarthritis during follow-up between 1993 and 2001, and 146 similar subjects who remained arthritis-free.

Dr. Dorothy J. Pattison, from the University of Manchester in the UK, and colleagues found that low intake of fruits, vegetables, and vitamin C raised the risk of inflammatory polyarthritis. For example, subjects who consumed the lowest amounts of vitamin C were three times more likely to develop the condition than their peers who consumed the highest amounts.

Although lower intake of fruits and vegetables seemed to increase the

arthritis risk, the trends were not statistically significant, the researchers point out. Similarly, low intake of vitamin E and beta-carotene was only weakly linked with an increased risk of inflammatory polyarthritis.

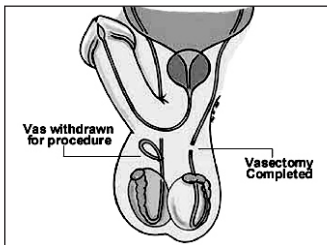
The findings contrast with a recent report linking high doses of vitamin C with worsening disease in guinea pigs with osteoarthritis, the more common type of arthritis that occurs with aging.

In an interview, Pattison said that these opposite findings may reflect the fact that rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis are caused by different physiologic problems. With rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease, the body attacks itself, she explained. In contrast, osteoarthritis involves a degenerative process that worsens over time.

Pattison added that her group has a study being reviewed for publication that looks at the effect of meat consumption on the risk of arthritis.

Source: <http://www.annals.com>

What is vasectomy



Vasectomy is a procedure that a man can ask a doctor to perform to make him sterile. The doctor removes a section of the two tubes (vas deferens) that carry sperm from the testes to the penis. The testes are the two sex organs in the scrotum.

A few months after the vasectomy, the semen (the fluid that is ejaculated during sex) will no longer contain sperm. There is no change in a man's ability to have an erection and sexual intercourse after the surgery. The only difference is that there are no sperm in the semen to cause pregnancy.

When is it used?

A vasectomy is one of the most effective and safest forms of birth control. It is important to understand that sterilisation is usually permanent.

What happens after the procedure?

There may be some pain in your groin for 3 or 4 days after the operation. Some blood or yellow liquid may ooze from the cuts on the outside. The area around the cuts may swell a bit and turn black and blue.

You may have sex again as

soon as you feel able, usually about a week after the procedure. For 2 to 4 months use other birth control methods during sexual intercourse, until your semen test is sperm-free. Ask your doctor what other steps you should take and when you should come back for a checkup and semen tests.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

- Vasectomy is a very reliable method of birth control.
- There are no pills to take or devices to insert, and there is no interruption of sex.

When should I call the doctor?

- Call the doctor immediately if:
 - A fever develops.
 - It is difficult to urinate.
 - There is excessive swelling in the testes.

Source: <http://soc.uchicago.edu>

Keeping them healthy, keeping them home

How to care for your loved ones at home

STAR HEALTH DESK

You may have somebody at your home, very dear to you, but very sick with long illness, requiring continuous medical care. You may very often need to take him/her to various Doctors, clinics, hospitals, diagnostics, etc. It may be necessary to keep him/her in hospital for treatment for a long time. This is very expensive, time consuming, very exhausting and disrupts all the family members' lifestyles. Taking care even of a loved one with chronic illness for a long time is so physically and mentally draining. In most of the cases it becomes too heavy a burden to endure any longer. Relatives give up, and the condition of the patient deteriorates rapidly to tragic consequences.

This is a very common

situation but the picture may not, necessarily, be so gloomy. Home-Healthcare services may take away from you the heavy burden of treating your loved ones with chronic illness, and provide even life-long treatment, at the conveniences of your own home, and at a fraction of cost of hospital treatment. All over the world hospital cost is increasing so rapidly that there is quite understandably the trend to keep the patient in the hospital only in acute conditions and for interventional management only. Rest of the time, the patient is treated in his/her own home conveniently and cost-effectively by Home-Healthcare Providers.

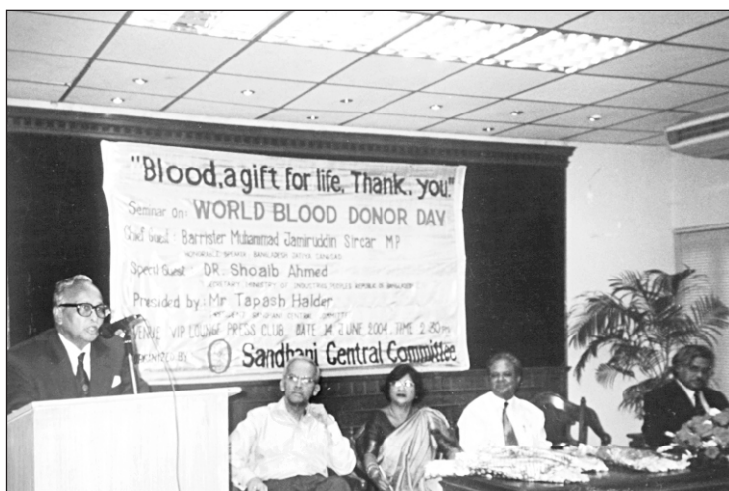
Home Healthcare is a revolutionary medical service system in our country, rendering medical care to the patients at home, under the

supervision of an experienced Physician, who acts as the Case-Manager for the patient. His job is to keep all the records of the patient, and to arrange, coordinate and deliver all kinds of treatment and care, the patient might require; including Doctors' visit, nursing service, physiotherapy and other rehabilitation services, counseling etc. For this purpose he regularly visits the patient at home and assesses the treatment requirements. He even may seek specialist advice for management of particular problem of the patient. Home-Healthcare system thus brings modern professional medicine to the doorsteps of your home more conveniently, more accessibly and cost-effectively. Most of all, it takes away from the family members of the patient, the huge burden of continuously taking care of a

chronically ill person, making it at last a possibility.

There was no healthcare providing organisation, in our country, which renders Home-Healthcare services to the patients. Fortunately this service is now available in Bangladesh. Lifeline Healthcare Limited, a newly formed but very professionally run Healthcare Provider, first time in Bangladesh, started this service since January this year. They provide continuous lifesaving medical care to patients at home, including doctors home visit, nursing service, physiotherapy, pathology service etc. Services can be available by calling day and night their 24-hour control room number 8155550-2. This will fill a vacuum in our healthcare service sector, and will make a lasting contribution to our country's health.

WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY: SANDHANI'S ACTIVITY



Sandhani is working in the field of volunteer blood donation in our country. They observed 'World Blood Donor day' on 14th June last. On the occasion they arranged a colorful rally, distributed T-shirts among rickshaw pullers to aware people and organised an art competition at Dhaka Shishu Academy.