

CHF News: Take It To Heart



A monthly newsletter for REACT study patients

Issue #2

A Low Sodium Diet Made Easy

By Pamela Monkhouse
Clinical Dietitian, University of Alberta Hospital

Healthy eating keeps you feeling well.

When you develop any type of health problem, your dietary choices play an even more important role in maintaining your health. When diagnosed with congestive heart failure, one of the most important changes you should make in your eating habits is to avoid too much sodium.

What is sodium?

Sodium and chloride are the compounds that make up salt. Today, salt's major use is flavouring. In your body, salt helps maintain a proper water balance.

Don't we need sodium?

Yes, the body does need some sodium. We can usually meet our sodium needs by following Canada's Food Guide, which tells us to eat a minimum of 5 servings of fruits and vegetables, 5 servings of grains, 2 servings of dairy products and 2 servings of meat and alternates, each and every day.

Why must sodium be avoided?

With congestive heart failure, the body cannot get rid of the extra sodium. The sodium builds up resulting in the body retaining extra fluid. This is called edema, and it is why your weight may jump 2-3 kg in a day or why your feet and hands may swell.

How much sodium can I have?

The usual amount of sodium suggested for congestive heart failure patients is 2 grams per day.

How do I stick to the suggested amount of sodium?

Most of the extra sodium we get every day is added to our foods. So, limiting your sodium intake is not as hard as you may think.

Here are some practical suggestions to help in day-to-day living:

- Do not add salt while cooking foods, including soups, stews, roasts, vegetables, pastas and hot cereal (you can still use some salt in baked goods). Use herbs and spices to flavour your foods.

- Do not add salt to your food at the table. One teaspoon of table salt contains 2.3 grams of sodium.
- Do not use soya sauce or seasoning salts. Use herbs and spices, lemon juice or vinegar instead. Salt substitutes are not recommended unless they have been approved by your doctor.
- Use fresh or frozen vegetables. Do not use canned vegetables as they are usually processed with salt.
- Do not use pickles, olives, pickled fish or vegetables, salted snacks or salted crackers.
- Do not use commercially prepared foods, if possible, as they are usually processed with salt. These include canned or packaged soups, instant noodles, processed meats (bologna, sausage, bacon, pastrami, salami, etc.), and vegetables in sauces.
- Be a wise consumer and read the labels before buying any food product. If salt or sodium is listed near the top of the ingredient list, then there is too much of it

in the product. Some labels state the amount of sodium per serving, making the right choice easier.

What can I do when I go to a restaurant?

If you know you are going to dine out, make sure your other meals of the day are low in sodium so that you can have a higher sodium choice if necessary. Nevertheless, choose restaurants that offer low sodium choices. If you are unsure about what the restaurant offers, call ahead and ask if they can prepare lower sodium foods.

- Choose baked, broiled, steamed, poached or grilled foods, and fresh vegetables and fruit.
- Ask how the food is prepared and cooked. If salt is used, ask for the food to be prepared without salt.

- Avoid the following foods as they are high in sodium: Asian foods containing MSG, olives and pickles, foods with sauces and gravies, fried or breaded foods, casseroles, pizza, enchiladas, tacos, nachos and potato skins. Use oil and vinegar for salad dressing. If you receive food that has been salted, send it back. Remember, the customer is always right!

What do I do if I am traveling?

When booking your air flights, ask for a low sodium meal. If you are travelling by car, pack a cooler with fresh fruit, vegetables and low salt snacks.

As you can see, a low sodium diet does not have to be difficult to follow. With a bit of careful planning and imagination, eating can still be enjoyable.

Fluid Restriction Made Easy

*By Pamela Monkhouse
Clinical Dietitian, University of Alberta Hospital*

Your doctor will often advise you to restrict your fluid intake and to weigh yourself daily. Why? When you have congestive heart failure, your body will retain fluid, but by drinking less, you can reduce the amount of fluid it retains.

How do I know I am retaining fluid?

One of the first signs of fluid retention is weigh gain. By weighing yourself each morning, you will be able to see if you have retained any fluid. A weight gain of 2-3 lbs in a day will be due to fluid. If this happens day after day, your body is building up fluid and you should contact your doctor.

What is considered a fluid?

Any food that is liquid at room

temperature is considered to be a fluid. This includes jello, ice cream, sherbet, as well as water, tea, coffee, milk, etc. Pudding is not considered a fluid.

How much fluid should I take in a day?

The amount you should limit your intake to is prescribed by your doctor. Usually, the limit is set between 1.2 to 1.8 liters or 5 to 7 cups of fluid each day .

How do I control fluid intake and thirst?

The following are suggestions for controlling your fluid intake:

- Salt and sugar can make you thirsty. A low salt diet will reduce both your fluid retention and thirst. Carefully choosing when and what sweets to eat will minimize your thirst.

- Divide your fluid allowance into 3 shifts so you do not drink all your fluids in the morning and have no allowance left for the evening. For example, if you are limited to 1.5 liters of fluid a day, your allowance could be divided like this:
7:00 am to 12 noon - 2 1/2 cups
12 noon to 5:00 pm - 2 1/2 cups
5:00 pm to bedtime - 1 cup
- To quench your thirst, you can use unsweetened gum, sour candies or popsicles (only 75 mL or 1/4 cup of fluid). Some people use lemon wedges.
- Use margarine or mayonnaise to moisten your foods.

If you are still finding it difficult to stick to your fluid allowance, ask to see your dietitian for help.



Caution: SALT AHEAD!

By Pamela Monkhouse
Clinical Dietitian, University of Alberta Hospital

Many of your favourite recipes may have too much salt to fit into a low salt diet. By adding a pinch of imagination and a few herbs and spices, you can leave out the salt and adjust these good old recipes to suit your health needs as well as your taste buds. Use salt-free margarine or vegetable oil instead of regular margarine. Use fresh or dried herbs and spices. If using powder spices, remember to avoid the salt-based products such as garlic salt. Replace commercial sauces with a low salt variety such as the pasta sauce in Issue #1 of this newsletter.

The following meat loaf recipe has 500 mg of sodium and it shows how the salt can add up even in simple meals.

1 1/2 lbs	ground beef	750 g
1/3 cup	ketchup, chili sauce, or barbeque sauce	75 mL
1/3 cup	whole wheat bread crumbs	75 mL
1	small onion, chopped	1
1/2 tsp	salt	2 mL
1/4 tsp	pepper	1 mL
1 tsp	Worcestershire sauce	5 mL
1	egg	



Look to our *Cook to Your Heart's Content* section for the low salt version of this meat loaf. Remember, with little effort, you can enjoy all your favourite recipes. There are also many cookbooks to help you in your search for tasty low salt meals. If you are like me, you can never have too many cookbooks! Bon Appetit!

HEARTWISE ADVICE



Don't be shy, ask questions

When it comes to managing your health, consider yourself the most important person in the process. To make the right decisions, you should have the full information about your condition and your medication. Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. Ask questions! These members of the healthcare team are available to provide you with the answers you need.

HEARTFELT PROFILES



At the age of 35, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Nine years later, following a radical mastectomy, metastasis to the bones, and the final chemotherapy treatment, I started putting on a lot of weight and experiencing difficulty breathing. During a regular check-up at the cancer clinic, my doctor suspected that my weight gain was actually water retention, and had me admitted to a hospital right away. Following some tests, I was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. My hospital stay lasted 10 days but I was on oxygen therapy

for four months. Since that time, I have been taking four different medications to control my CHF. About a year ago, my back pain returned so I had to receive five days of radiation and chemotherapy.

Sometimes I feel really frustrated because I don't have my full strength any more. I also tend to lose my patience quickly. I get tired easily, even just from walking. When I feel unwell, most of the housework gets done by the other members of my family. Last March, my condition reached the point where I was forced to quit my job. This has been the most difficult decision I've had to make. Whenever I feel really frustrated, I visit or call my parents and sisters and spend some time with them.

I don't follow a special diet, but because my weight has been decreasing, I started taking *Ensure* (two cans a day). I drink six glasses of fluids daily (water, coffee, juice).

The only advice I can give to other patients with CHF is to take it easy and enjoy life to the fullest. Live a normal life (don't think about being sick), enjoy the things that you like to do, spend more time with family and friends, take your medication regularly, do your exercises and have regular check-ups.



CHF can be managed, especially if you, the patient, take an active role. Give some special attention to yourself, and **DO REACT** to your body's needs:

Do weigh yourself each day

Observe and record any signs and symptoms of CHF

Rest

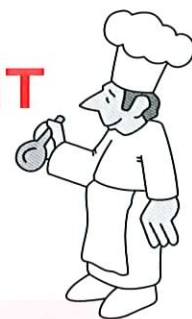
Exercise

Avoid salty foods and limit fluids in your diet

Contact your doctor if you feel unwell

Take your medication regularly

COOK TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT



Lower Sodium Meat Loaf

1 1/2 lbs	ground beef	750 g
1/3 cup	low sodium ketchup	75 mL
1/3 cup	whole wheat bread crumbs	75 mL
1	small onion, chopped	1
1/8 tsp	each: basil and oregano	dash
1/4 cup	chopped, fresh parsley	50 mL
1/4 tsp	pepper	1 mL
dash	Tabasco® sauce	dash
1	egg	1

Preheat oven to 350° F (180° C). In a large mixing bowl, combine all ingredients; mix well. Place in a greased 8 x 4 inch loaf pan or 1.5 litre ring mold. Shape into a loaf. Bake 40 to 45 minutes or until no longer pink in centre. Let stand a few minutes to set; invert onto a serving platter.

Makes 6 servings.

Approximately 146 mg of sodium, 298 calories, 23.5 g of protein, 7.6 g of carbohydrates, 18.8 g of fat.

Seasoning Tips:

- Try adding 1 tbsp (15 mL) lemon juice to the ground beef mixture.
- Substitute the basil and oregano with 1 tsp (5 mL) poultry seasoning.
- Substitute Tabasco® sauce with 1 tsp (5 mL) chili powder. Read the label to make sure that the chili powder does not have salt as one of the ingredients.

From "Low Sodium Savvy" by L. Kerr, M. Kennedy, Clinical Dietitians, Nephrology and Renal Transplant Program, University of Alberta Hospital

*If you would like to purchase a copy of this cookbook, please contact:
Cara Stark – Phone 780-407-1565, Fax 780-407-6015,
Address 5B1.07 Walter Mackenzie Centre, 8440-112 street
Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2B7. Cost: \$9.95 (includes GST and shipping)*