

Health Concepts

February 2023

Stay informed. Try to be healthier than yesterday.

PREFACE

The presented articles intend to provide health information, encourage, assist, and steer you in the direction of improved well-being. The aim isn't to give you strict instructions to cut out everything you enjoy. You can't change your genes or even much of the environment and circumstances around you, but there are lifestyle choices you (and only you) can make to boost your health. Being informed and making appropriate decisions can reduce your health risks and potentially enhance your quality of life.

When we make healthy lifestyle choices in our daily lives, we benefit both physically as well as mentally. Choosing healthier habits helps lower the risk of injury and disease, especially chronic illness. But making healthy lifestyle choices isn't easy; we may have to compromise on many temptations. Old habits die hard. Changing your habits is a process that involves several iterations and takes a while before changes occur and you reap the benefits.

When it comes to unhealthy food choices, sugar is usually the main villain. We seldom realize that excess salt intake can also turn out to be a villain affecting our health. Excess consumption of sugar, salt, and oil and a lack of physical activity are the main reasons for lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and dyslipidemia.

The Indian Medical Association's mantra for tackling lifestyle diseases is "A teaspoon less of salt, sugar, and oil every day."

To keep yourself well,
you need to eat well, too.

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NUTRITIONAL FACTS

अदरक (Hindi)

இஞ்சி (Tamil)

అల్లం (Telugu)



GINGER

Ginger's generic name, *Zingiber officinale*, is derived from the Greek *zingiberis*, which comes from the Sanskrit name for the spice, *Singabera*. The spice comes from the rhizome (underground stem) of the plant. Ginger can be used fresh, dried, powdered, or as an oil or juice. It's a common ingredient in most recipes. About 2 percent of essential oil is present in ginger root, which is used in the cosmetic industry as a fragrance. Ginger is loaded with nutrients and bioactive compounds that have powerful benefits for your body and brain. *Gingerol* is the main bioactive compound in ginger, responsible for much of ginger's medicinal properties. Fresh ginger has all its natural chemical compounds intact. You lose some of the *gingerol* when the root is dried and ground into a powder. Fresh ginger can be kept in the fridge for up to three weeks, unpeeled and even longer in the freezer, peeled or unpeeled.

- The anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties help with protective effects against cancer.
- It alleviates nausea and an upset stomach.
- helps in weight loss by controlling insulin levels, boosting metabolism, and aiding in workout recovery.
- natural pain reliever. especially beneficial for arthritis and increasing joint mobility.
- helps lower blood sugar levels in people with type 2 diabetes.
- speeds up the emptying of the stomach, which is thus beneficial for people with indigestion and related stomach discomfort.
- effective against menstrual pain when taken at the beginning of the menstrual cycle.
- It prevents cardiovascular disease by working as a blood thinner, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Because of the powerful antioxidants, it improves brain function by reducing inflammation and protecting the brain from free radicals.
- improves immunity and helps lower the risk of infections.

Note: In small doses, ginger has few side effects. More than 5 grams of ginger per day may cause mild heartburn, diarrhea, mouth irritation, and increase the risk of bleeding.

MEDICAL UPDATE

This season, there are a lot of viral respiratory infections affecting all ages, especially children, usually presenting with symptoms of fever, body ache, tiredness, cough, and breathing difficulty. Some are even reporting conjunctivitis. While most are being managed as outpatients, some are requiring hospitalization. These are primarily viral respiratory infections, and most of them are not COVID-19 but more influenza and other respiratory viruses like adenovirus. Coughing and wheezing lasting for more than a week are more common in children, probably due to the cold weather and allergies. Physical distancing, masking, and washing hands are important. To prevent the spread of infection, children should stay home from school if they are sick.

Consider reporting to your primary physician if symptoms persist for more than 3 days as you must need to undergo examination, investigations and, further treatment.

PREVENTIVE PEARLS

Cough Remedies - at home.

- Honey.
- Hot tea, hot water or soups.
- Ginger.
- Steam inhalation.
- Gargle salt water.
- Menthol.
- Cough drops / lozenges.
- Drink fluids for hydration
- Use Over-the-Counter (OTC) Cough Medicine if nothing else works.

"Time and health are two precious assets that we don't recognize and appreciate until they have been depleted."

-- Denis Waitley

How much salt intake is too much?

Salt (also called common salt) is one of the most common ingredients used in our food, especially for adding salty flavor and for preservation. Salt (40% sodium and 60% chloride) is the main source of sodium in our diet. Sodium is an essential nutrient that our body needs for many important functions. The human body requires a small amount of sodium to help control blood pressure, conduct nerve impulses, contract and relax muscles, and maintain the proper water and mineral balance.

Health benefits of sodium

- Regulates Blood pressure
- Maintains fluid balance
- Improves hydration
- Helps Muscles contract

Most unprocessed foods, like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, meats, and dairy foods, are low in sodium. Most of the salt in our diets comes from commercially prepared foods, from salt added to cooking at home (added salt), and from salt added at the table before eating (table salt). Our bodies need only very small amounts of sodium. Most people eat too much sodium but may not be aware of it. One teaspoon (5 grams) of salt is equal to about 2,300 milligrams of sodium.

Recommended Daily Intake of Sodium	
age 14 years or older	2300 mg
age 9 to 13 years	1800 mg
age 4 to 8 years	1500 mg
age 1 to 3 years	1200 mg

The general recommended thumb rule is that you take less than 1 teaspoon (5 grams) of salt per day, inclusive of all dietary intake in all forms. If you consistently exceed the recommended amount, you're eating too much, and it can impact your health. Excess salt consumption causes your body to retain fluid, resulting in swelling of your legs in the short term. In the long term, excess salt intake impairs your kidney function,, leading to high blood pressure and heart problems.

Signs of increased sodium intake

- Boating - swollen legs, hands, swelling around eyes.
- Increased thirst
- Rise in blood Pressure
- Poor sleep quality

However, even though eating too much sodium causes problems, eating too little can be just as unhealthy. In fact, restricting sodium too much can lead to low levels of sodium in the blood (**Hyponatremia**) and severe depletion characterized by symptoms such as extreme tiredness, altered mental state / confusion, seizures, etc. Older adults need to be more cautious about this aspect.

Signs of decreased sodium intake

- Dizziness
- Headache
- Lack of energy
- Nausea
- Muscle Fatigue
- Hyponatremia

Recent data shows that an average Indian consumes 10.98 grams of salt per day 119% more than the recommended limit of five grams per day. Our predominant source of dietary salt, like in most developing countries, is from added salt during cooking and table salt. Whereas in high-income countries, processed foods account for over 75% of dietary salt intake.

However, increased urbanization, influence of globalization and increasing purchase power in India are leading to a rapid nutrition transition, and salt intake from pre-prepared packaged foods may be increasing. Ease of access and availability to these processed, ready-to-eat foods and mushrooming fast food restaurants are accounting for the recent shift in our predominant source of dietary salt intake. This is especially going to be harmful for individuals, society, and our nation as a whole by increasing the overall burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The habit of eating less salt must be inculcated during childhood.

Mend your salty habits

- Use less than 1 tsp. of salt / day.
- Avoid added salt / table salt.
- Eat plenty of fruits & vegetables.
- Read Nutritional labels.
- Be intelligent, while eating out.
- Avoid Processed, ready to eat food.
- Keep yourself well hydrated.
- Limit food accompaniments like salted butter, salty spice mixes, chutneys, pickles, papads / appalam, salted snacks etc.

Take less than 1 teaspoon (5 grams) of salt per day

Dr.Y.Sreenivasa Varma MBBS, MBA, PhD.

Yalamanchili Healthcare Services Private Limited

17, First Main Road, IIT Colony, Pallikaranai, Chennai 600100.

dr.varma@yalamanchili.co.in
+91- 9962060702 / 9444074005

