

## The Potential Risk of High Sodium Foods

Earlier this week, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) released a report indicating that chain restaurant meals can contain dangerously high levels of sodium. Researchers from CSPI examined a total of 102 different meals from seventeen different food chain restaurants and found that 85 of them contained more than a day's worth of sodium. Some of the meals actually contained more than four days worth of sodium. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend that healthy adults consume no more than a total dose 2,300 mg of salt per day. Many experts believe this level is too high and are urging it to be reduced by 50%.

CSPI reported that the Olive Garden's Chicken Parmigiana and Tour of Italy (lasagna, a bread stick and a garden fresh salad with house dressing) contained approximately 6,000 mg of sodium. There were also two meals at Chili's that contained between 6,400 mg and 6,900 mg of sodium. The winner, however, was found at Red Lobster. Its Admiral's Feast with Caesar salad, creamy lobster-topped mashed potato, biscuit and lemonade contained a whopping 7,106 mg of sodium per one serving alone.

With a report like this, you can imagine how the news services and evening news programs were buzzing. ABC News interviewed Dr. Keith Ayoob, Director of the Nutrition Clinic at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, who voiced concern, indicating that excessive salt can contribute to unfavorable blood pressure levels, leading to poor cardiovascular function. He commented, "Salt is an inexpensive flavor enhancer that your taste buds quickly get used to and crave—and it can be tricky to monitor how much you're consuming." Michael Jacobson, Executive Director of CSPI, commented, "Who knows how many Americans have been pushed prematurely into their graves thanks to sodium levels like those found in Olive Garden, Chili's and Red Lobster?" He added, "These chains are sabotaging the food supply. They should cut back and give consumers the freedom to decide for themselves how much salt they want."

Other foods filled with sodium are soups and fried foods. A typical fried chicken or fried fish meal will have well over 2,000 mg of sodium and many also include the neurotoxin monosodium glutamate, better known as MSG. The positive news is if you consume fruits, vegetables and nuts, they are naturally sodium free and also contain large amounts of potassium which supports healthy blood pressure. Nuts are my personal favorite, as they also contain magnesium along with potassium. These two powerful minerals are well-proven in numerous medical studies to support healthy cardiovascular function and blood pressure.

More good news for natural, healthy foods has just been reported in a study<sup>1</sup> published in the May 2009 edition of *Archives of Ophthalmology*. The study indicated that healthy fats, such as those found in fish, olive oil and nuts, can reduce the risk of severe vision concerns as we age. During the study, a group of almost 2,500 men and women were followed for up to a decade. It was found that those individuals who consumed a serving of fish every week were 31% less likely to develop poor vision compared to those who did not. Those

who consumed a couple of servings of nuts per week reduced their risk by 35%.

Dr. Elaine Chong headed up another group which studied more than 6,700 people between the ages of 58 to 69 years old. The study<sup>2</sup>, also published in the May 2009 edition of the *Archives of Ophthalmology*, found that those who consumed omega-3 fatty acids reduced their risk of developing poor vision by 15%. Those who ate the most olive oil were about half as likely to develop this condition compared to those who consumed less than a 1 ml per week. Dr. Chong and her team also noted that individuals consuming trans-fatty acids were about 75% more likely to develop severe vision concerns.

Trans-fat is a type of fat frequently used in commercial cooking products and fried foods. This type of fat is known to elevate LDL ("bad") cholesterol. Dr. Johanna Seddon, of the New England Eye Center and Tufts University School of Medicine, commented, "I recommend to my patients that they consume a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids in fish, especially salmon, sardines and mackerel, as well as nuts and green leafy vegetables." Dr. Seddon added, "Those not able to consume these foods should consider taking supplements containing fish oil or lutein." In 1994, Dr. Seddon and her colleagues were actually first to report the beneficial effects omega-3 fatty acids may have in lowering the risk of poor vision.

Another study<sup>3</sup>, published in the May 2009 edition of the journal *Ophthalmology*, examined the dietary patterns of 4,000 older adults and found that those who consumed larger amounts of omega-3 fatty acids or foods high in vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc and lutein had a lower risk of developing poor vision. Foods with a low glycemic index also appeared to have a protective effect. The take home message is clear: eliminate high sodium fast foods, fried foods and soda, and increase your intake of salmon/fish oil, nuts, extra virgin olive oil, fruits and vegetables to promote healthy cardiovascular health, blood pressure and vision.

Vitacost now offers a new brand of natural and organic products called Best of All™. The line contains a host of organic nuts, seed and fruits. Most of the products are organic. As one of many examples, Best of All offers organic walnut halves and pieces. Walnuts are extremely high in B vitamins, magnesium and potassium. They also contain high levels of omega-3 fatty acids with 0 – that is correct – mg of sodium and cholesterol. A ¼ cup of these walnuts provides 210 calories including 18 grams of good fats, 3 grams of fiber and 5 grams of protein. I recall published medical studies indicating five servings of walnuts per week drastically reduced the risk of developing adverse neurological health as we age.

The best selling nuts are the tamari almonds. They are so delicious that even kids like them. Another great nut is the Brazil nut. In addition to potassium and magnesium, this nut has the highest levels of selenium found in food. Selenium is a powerful nutrient that supports good cellular and immune health. Moving on to seeds, the healthiest is the pumpkin seed. This seed supports overall health as well as men's prostate health. Best of All also offers organic goji berries, organic shredded coconut, organic sunflower seeds, mango slices and many other healthy and delicious snacks. To review all 39 new Best of All products click [here](#).

Nutraceutical Sciences Institute® (NSI®) also offers a very popular potassium and magnesium combination in capsules for those looking to supplement their diets with these two essential minerals.

And, of course, when you're looking for the highest level and quality source of omega-3 fatty acids, look no further than NSI Mega EFA®. Each two-capsule serving provides 2,126 mg of molecularly-distilled fish oil, providing 1,200 mg EPA and DHA. This is double the active EPA and DHA when compared to other fish oils. Vitacost also sells a great Spanish Extra Virgin Olive Oil at a great value by Eden® Foods.

A delicious and healthy way to add salmon to your diet is the new, made-in-France, St. Dalfour Gourmet on the Go™ Wild Salmon with Vegetables. It does not need refrigeration and even includes a spoon/fork so you can consume a quick and healthy meal at work, on airplanes, etc. Do not forget about your pets. Halo® makes amazingly healthy pet foods with wild caught salmon as the first (largest amount) ingredient and 100% natural and pure wild caught salmon freeze-dried treats for both cats and dogs. In fact, our largest shareholder and Chief Operation Architect started to give them to his dogs after he conducted research to find the best quality foods and treats for his pets.

**Dr. Allen S. Josephs**