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**TRIMMING SALT CAN SAVE LIVES**

Arizona took the first step today improve Arizonans' health simply by reducing the amounts of salt consumed. The state joined a national initiative to slash 20% of sodium from diets in the next 5 years.

“Most people are eating twice as much salt as they should and about 80% of it comes from pre-processed foods, like canned soups and frozen dinners!” said Will Humble, Interim Director of the Arizona Department of Health Services. “The fact is - the “sodium” line in the nutrition facts label is just as important as the fat line - but it’s often ignored. The overall goal is to get food processors to reduce the amount of salt in their products. Until that happens, everyone has to pay a lot more attention to the sodium information in the nutrition facts.”

A recent study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that cutting dietary salt by 3 grams (about 1 1/2 pieces of pepperoni pizza) per day may reduce coronary heart disease and stroke. In Arizona, this means 2,000 less cases of coronary artery disease, 1,000 fewer strokes, 2,000 fewer heart attacks, and a reduction of deaths from any cause by 1,000 every year. All from a modest decrease in salt intake.

You can start reducing sodium at the grocery store and the places you eat. Salt is used as flavoring and a preservative. Fresh fruits, vegetables and meats are naturally low in sodium, while the amount in processed foods varies greatly. Nutrition labels can help you make healthy choices about sodium in soup, bread, sausage, chips, etc. At ADHS we call those who make healthy choices for the family and the community, “Champions for Change”. Be a champion today by pledging to watch your sodium. Details are available on the ADHS website at: <http://www.azdhs.gov/salt>

The national effort is coordinated by the New York City Health Department and includes the American Heart Association, the National Kidney Foundation, the American Medical Association, and State health departments from Alaska, California, North Carolina, Pennsylvania. This is actually an international effort as Japan, the UK, Finland, and Portugal have already successfully reduced population-wide salt intake by using a combination of regulations on the salt content in processed foods, labeling of processed and prepared foods, public education, and by collaborating with the food industry to reduce the amount of salt that is added to foods. To learn more about these efforts, visit the webpage for the National Salt Reduction Initiative (NSRI) at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cardio/cardio-salt-initiative.shtml>.

One step at a time, you can make lasting changes that will improve your health.

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