



Thyme to shake your need for Salt

Salt is so simple and plentiful we sometimes take it for granted but salt is an essential element the human body needs to function properly. For centuries, salt has been valued for its properties of enhancing flavour and preventing foods from spoiling. In Roman times, soldiers received salt as payment for services, giving us the word 'salary', and Greek slave traders bartered salt for slaves, which gave us the saying 'not worth his salt'. Today, salt remains a staple in making more than 14,000 products and foods including bread, breakfast cereals, biscuits and canned goods.

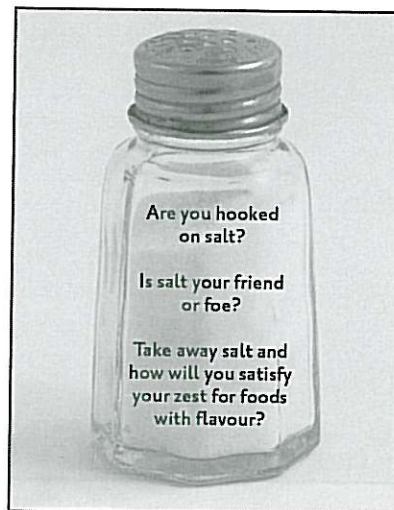
So much salt is added during the food manufacturing process you shouldn't need to add extra salt to your diet.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation (www.heartandstroke.ca) says Canadians consume two or even three times the recommended amount required for good health. It recommends healthy adults consume no more than 2,300 mg of salt (one teaspoon = 2,300 mg of salt) and persons on restricted salt diets should limit themselves to about 1,500 mg (2/3 of a teaspoon) per day. Adding more salt to food may seem like taking a friend to lunch because it brings out flavour and makes foods taste great but, depending on your age and health, salt can be your foe.

That's because eating too much salt may raise your blood pressure and high blood pressure causes your heart to work harder. Over time arteries that deliver the blood become scarred and less elastic so your heart has to beat even harder to pump blood.

Damage can occur when organs don't receive enough blood to function properly and this may lead to a heart attack, stroke or kidney disease. Those who restrict their salt intake for health reasons have shown the less salt consumed, the greater the decrease in blood pressure.

You can reduce your salt intake and still satisfy your passion for foods with flavour. Herbs add great flavour and aroma. Cooking with herbs shakes your dependence on salt while it enhances the taste. Herbs not only add zest to everyday cooking but you can grow them indoors or out; it's fun, it's cheaper than buying them at the grocery store, and gardening is good exercise. Fresh cut herbs can be used immediately in your favourite recipe or frozen to maintain freshness.



Herbs like basil, chili, curry, thyme, sage or oregano enhance tomatoes. Treat your taste buds by adding caraway, mustard or tarragon to asparagus. Add a little fresh basil, dill, mustard or thyme sprinkled on your wax or green beans. Who needs salt when you can try a little rosemary on your broccoli or caraway, cumin or curry on your cabbage.

Why not put away the salt and experiment with fresh herbs; it's better for your health and you're sure to taste the difference.