Fact, Americans consume too much sodium. Approximately 90% of the sodium we eat comes in the form of salt. Current dietary guidelines say people aged 2 years and older should eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium or about 1 teaspoon of salt each day. However, about half the population should consume even less. A diet containing 1,500 mg per day is recommended for persons 51 years and older and those of any age who are African American or have high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease. Even those who try to watch what they eat may not realize just how much salt is in food.

Many Americans do not know that unseen salt drives up their blood pressure, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke, which are the first and third leading causes of death in the United States. Studies show that adults eat an average of 3,400 mg of sodium every day, which is more than twice the recommended limit for most American adults and far more than the body needs.

The salt shaker is not the major problem, nor is the pinch of salt added in preparing foods at home. The overwhelming majority of the salt we eat, approximately 77%, is already in the foods we buy from grocery stores and restaurants. Sodium is not only present in salty foods, like curried meats and chips, it is also hidden in foods that may not even taste salty like cereal and condiments. The hidden sources of sodium is what makes reducing sodium challenging for individuals and for society.

The changing of individual behavior is very hard, even among the most motivated. Knowledge, education and improving the available choices is vital in reducing and modifying sodium intake. Buying fresh, frozen, or no salt added canned vegetables, eating more fruit, and using fresh poultry, fish and other lean meats can help in reducing your daily sodium intake. Also using low or reduced sodium items and limiting sauces and mixes helps in lowering total intake. Remember to eat wisely when dining out, since restaurant foods can be high in sodium—you can always ask for low sodium options. Most importantly, learn to read nutrition facts labels. Less sodium equals better health.
Understanding Sodium on Food Labels

1. Start with the Serving Size

Look here for both the serving size and the number of servings in the package. Compare the amount you actually eat to the serving size listed on the panel. If the serving size is one cup and you eat two cups, you are getting twice the sodium.

2. Let the Percent Daily Values Be Your Guide

Use percent Daily Values (DV) to help evaluate how a particular food fits into your daily meal plan. Daily Values are average levels of nutrients for a person eating 2,000 calories a day. Percent DV are for the entire day, not just one meal or snack. A food item with a 5 percent DV of fat provides 5 percent of the total fat that a person consuming 2,000 calories a day should eat.

3. The High and Low of Daily Values:

- 5 percent or less is low
- 20 percent or more is high

Nutrition Tip: Rinsing canned vegetables in running water for at least 30 seconds before heating, cooking or eating washes off a great portion of the excess sodium.

Sodium Claims

Reading food labels can help you slash sodium. Here’s how to decipher them:

- "Sodium free" or "Salt free": Contains less than 5 milligrams of sodium per serving.
- "Unsalted" or "No salt added": No salt has been added.
- "Very low in sodium": Provides 35 milligrams of sodium (or less) per serving.
- "Low in sodium" or "Contains a small amount of sodium": Contains 140 milligrams of sodium (or less) per serving.
- "Reduced sodium" or "Less sodium": Provides at least 25 percent less sodium than the traditional product.
Holiday Food Safety Tips

Here are a few tips to avoid common kitchen blunders when preparing meals, buffets and even homemade food gifts this holiday season.

1. Wash hands before, during and after food preparation. Proper hand washing may eliminate the potential of a foodborne illness. Wash hands when switching tasks, such as handling raw meat and then cutting vegetables.

2. Keep kitchen surfaces such as countertops, cutting boards, utensils, and appliances clean throughout meal preparation and wash with hot, soapy water.

3. Always use two cutting boards: one for raw meat, poultry and fish and one for cutting vegetables or preparing ready-to-eat foods that do not require cooking.

4. Use separate spoons and forks to taste, stir and serve food.

5. Use a food thermometer. It is the ONLY reliable way to determine the doneness of your food and ensure that food is cooked to proper temperatures. Visit this website to see minimum internal cooking temperatures: http://homefoodsafety.org/safety-tips/cook

6. Refrigerate food within two hours of being served to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria that can lead to food poisoning. This is especially important when serving buffets.

7. Use a refrigerator thermometer and make sure it’s set at below 40°F.

8. Never allow foods to defrost at room temperature, on the counter or in warm water. Defrost food only in the refrigerator or in the microwave. When defrosting food in the refrigerator, remember to cover raw meat and place it on the bottom shelf so juices won’t drip onto other foods. When defrosting food in the microwave, cook it immediately afterward.

9. When baking, avoid eating foods containing raw eggs like cookie dough or cake batter. Raw eggs may contain harmful bacteria that can lead to food poisoning.

Ways to Holiday Health

There are many easy steps for you and your family to stay healthy during the holidays, including:

1. Eat well and get moving
2. Prepare dinner safely
3. Practice fire safety
4. Monitor the children
5. Get your vaccination
6. Get exams and screenings
7. Fasten belts while driving
8. BE SMOKE-FREE
9. Don’t drink and drive
10. Manage stress
11. Bundle up for warmth
12. Wash hands to be safe and healthy
FLPP Monthly Recipe: Bell Pepper and Chicken Noodles

Ingredients:

- Serves 5; 1 1/2 cups per serving
- Preparation time: 15 minutes
- Cooking time: 18 minutes

12 ounces chicken tenders, or tenderloins
1 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
4 ounces dried no-yolk egg noodles
1/4 cup no-salt added ketchup
1 teaspoon dried oregano, crumbled
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1 green bell pepper, sliced
1 red bell pepper, sliced
1 cup onion, sliced
1 can (14.5 ounces) no-salt added diced tomatoes
Vegetable oil spray

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, whisk together chicken broth, ketchup, oregano, garlic powder, and pepper until well blended; set aside.

2. On the stove heat a pan to medium-high heat until very hot. Remove from heat and spray with vegetable oil spray. Cook chicken for 5 to 8 minutes, stirring frequently.

3. In a separate saucepan cook bell peppers, onions, undrained tomatoes, noodles, and broth mixture; bring to a boil.

4. Add cooked chicken to vegetable mixture, reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 13 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve hot.

Nutritional Analysis per Serving:

- Calories: 222
- Protein: 29 g
- Total carbohydrate: 29 g
- Total fat: 2 g
- Saturated fat: 1 g
- Polyunsaturated fat: 1 g
- Monounsaturated fat: 1 g
- Dietary fiber: 3 g
- Sodium: 425 mg
- Cholesterol: 39 mg

Food Safety Tip:

Cooking Chicken Safely

- Avoid cross contamination.
- Do not wash chicken.
- Thaw properly: There are several methods for thawing raw chicken that has been frozen, including placing it in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave.
- Cook properly: Cook chicken to an internal temperature of 165°F.
Greenville Public Works Open Enrollment Benefits Fair

The Food Literacy Partners Program participated in the Open Enrollment Benefits Fair at Greenville Public Works. FLPP Student Coordinator, Lana Nasrallah, provided Greenville Public Work Employees with nutrition education on MyPlate and healthy recipes. Lana Nasrallah, with the assistance of Masters of Public Health Candidates Sidney Graves and Melanie Morgan also provided a food demonstration on preparing a healthy fruit salad. The FLPP was very excited to participate in the fair and connect with the community members providing them awareness of our program and answering their nutrition and food questions!

![Image of the fair]

Food Literacy Trainings with Masters of Public Health Students

The Food Literacy Partners Program held a review course and food safety cooking session with the Masters of Public Health FLPP student volunteers on Monday, November 25th.

![Image of the training]

“The amount of nutrition information I learned from the Food Literacy program has helped me to strive for a healthier life and has encouraged me to spread my knowledge to my family, friends, and community. I really enjoyed the review and cooking session and was able to apply what I learned from the course modules in our group discussions about food and chronic diseases. I was also able to apply my food safety and cooking information!”

-Sabrina Toppin, MPH candidate
## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers are needed for ongoing FLPP training sessions please email Constance Foushee at flpp@ecu.edu if you would like to know more about our training sessions or if you would like to get involved!

### Stroke ID Program
The Stroke Risk Identification Program is a stroke prevention program that focuses on risk identification through stroke screening, community education and awareness of stroke warning signs, symptoms, and response to the onset of stroke symptoms.

Email or call Terry Congleton to get involved!

tconglet@vidanthealth.com
252-847-0162

### The Sunday Fountain Clinic at Grimesland
The Sunday Fountain Clinic at Grimesland is a part of Pitt County Care Inc. which is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving access to health care in Eastern North Carolina. The clinic is completely volunteer run.

To sign up visit:
www.ecu.edu/org/pcci/about.htm

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www.facebook.com/foodliteracypartnersprogram

**FOR MORE NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INFORMATION VISIT:**

www.foodsafety.gov

www.myplate.gov

www.eatright.org

www.cdc.gov/nutrition/