

Natural Health News

August 2014

EVERGREEN SPA & WELLNESS
ELY, MN

SALT IS VITAL TO HEALTH

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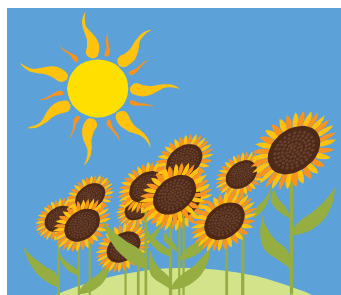
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Salt is an essential nutrient. An essential nutrient is one required for life that the body cannot produce itself and which is required for good health. For humans, salt is as essential as water. The human body contains about eight ounces of salt. The amount of salt is regulated in our bodies by our kidneys and by perspiration. Without salt the myriad chemical reactions that support enzyme function, energy production, hormone production, protein transport and many other biochemical processes simply can't work. Western people today consume about half the amount of salt that they consumed traditionally. Before the days of refrigeration, most of our meat and fish was preserved by salting it. The Japanese, who have one of the highest salt intakes in the world, also have the highest life expectancy. Salt provides two elements that are essential for life and for good health: sodium and chloride ions which must be supplied by food. One of salt's major functions is to regulate blood volume and pressure, including the flexibility of the blood vessels. Blood pressure can be affected by stress, age, exercise, heredity and diet. For certain individuals who are salt sensitive, excessive consumption of sodium can increase blood pressure, but for the majority, blood pressure is not raised by increased salt intake. The entire debate on salt and health has almost exclusively focused on the issue of blood pressure, with little regard to any other risk factors or biomarkers resulting from low salt intake. Sodium and chloride ions play a very important role in the firing of the nervous system neurons. Changing the consumption of salt has a minimal impact on the nervous system. Only at extreme levels of sodium deficiency will responses in the nervous system be noticed. Almost all the salt taken in with food is quickly absorbed from the small intestine and plays a key role in digestion. Sodium-dependent enzymes are required for carbohydrate digestion. Salt is our main dietary source of chloride, the major component of hydrochloric acid (HCl or stomach acid), needed for protein digestion. HCl also plays a role in keeping parasites and pathogens from entering the digestive tract—parasites can easily gain a foothold in those on low-salt diets. Other symptoms of hypochlorhydria (low HCl) include bloating, acne, iron deficiency, belching, indigestion, diarrhea and multiple food allergies. We need salt for digesting carbohydrates and proteins but we also need salt for digesting fats as sodium is involved in the manufacture of bile, which emulsifies fats so they can be absorbed. Salt is critical for brain development, neurological functions, proper pH, and osmotic pressure. ~ over ~

The adrenal glands are responsible for the release and regulation of over 50 of the body's hormones, including sex hormones and hormones that regulate blood pressure, glucose levels, mineral metabolism, healing and stress response. Adequate salt helps the adrenal glands to produce the hormones needed to keep the body's metabolism running smoothly. Therefore, craving salt is a sign of poor adrenal function. The adrenal hormone aldosterone helps regulate blood pressure. When there is a drop in aldosterone, which often happens during periods of stress or fatigue, the body responds by craving salt to help stabilize blood pressure. A 2010 Harvard study linked low-salt diets to an increase in insulin resistance, the condition that is a precursor to type 2 diabetes. Subjects on the low-salt diet developed insulin resistance within seven days. Other recent studies show that individuals with type 1 or type 2 diabetes die in much greater numbers when placed on a salt-restricted diet. Studies have also shown that elderly people with low sodium levels have more falls and broken hips and a decrease in cognitive abilities. Studies have confirmed the importance of a balance of electrolytes: sodium, calcium, potassium and magnesium. When the body loses electrolytes in perspiration or when suffering diarrhea, it can have serious consequences. Likewise, when we drink only water after exercise, the usual electrolyte balance is not restored. Marathon runners are warned to make sure they consume extra salt, and diarrhea is treated with Oral Rehydration Therapy to replace lost electrolytes. The consequences of not replacing salt can be serious, even deadly. If you are thirsty after working in the outdoors or exercise that stimulates a sweat, be sure to add a pinch of unrefined sea salt to your water. Otherwise the body simply gets rid of the water as fast as possible in an attempt to avoid low salt levels. Most table salt today is "refined" or "purified", a process that involves the use of dangerous chemicals. Avoid all processed, refined, "enhanced," and "fortified" salt; use unrefined sea salt, of which there are many brands available at the Evergreen Cottage.

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