

Trust Labels, Not Taste Buds, to Monitor Salt Intake

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Did you know that a cup of corn flakes has about the same amount of sodium as a cup of potato chips? Trust labels, not your taste buds to control salt intake.

According to their own labels, a single 32-gram serving of Kellogg's Corn Flakes contains 200 milligrams (mg) of sodium. A single 28-gram serving of Lays Classic Potato Chips contains 180 mg, nearly equivalent to the corn flakes on a per gram basis.

Lowering the sodium in your diet can reduce your chances of developing [high blood pressure](#), stroke and [heart attack](#). Taste, however, isn't the best way to tell how much sodium is in the foods you eat. Many bland foods are saltier than your taste buds might tell you. The potato chips taste saltier than the cereal because the salt is on the surface of the [potato chips](#) but mixed throughout the cereal.

"Salt is everywhere - be smart and on the lookout!" said National Jewish Health cardiologist Andrew Freeman, MD. "Most salt in the American diet comes not out of the shaker at home, but is added to food during processing and manufacture. So don't trust your tongue-read the labels to know how much sodium you are really consuming."

Americans consume a lot of salt. American men consume an average of 4,100 mg of sodium per day and women about 2,900 mg. The US government recommends a daily intake of 2,400 mg or less of sodium a day for people consuming a 2,000-calorie diet.

Research recently reported in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) suggested that lowering average sodium intake in America by 1,200 mg per day, a rounded teaspoon, could help avoid up to 99,000 heart attacks, 66,000 strokes and 92,000 deaths, and save up to \$24 billion in annual health care costs. Lowering sodium intake by as little as 400 mg per day could save as many as 32,000 lives.

"Look at the nutritional facts listed on food labels to be sure how much sodium you are consuming. You may be surprised by what you see," said Dr. Freeman. "Also pay attention to the serving size used for nutritional facts. They are often quite small."

For example, Campbell's Microwavable Bowls of soup, are packaged in one container, but labeled as two servings. A serving contains 750 mg of sodium. Thus, the bowl contains 1,500 mg, most of a day's worth of salt.

Other foods that typically have high levels of [sodium](#) include: wheat flakes cereal, processed cheeses, canned soups, processed cocoa, margarine, dill pickles and many salad dressings.

Provided by National Jewish Health

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