

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

June 28, 2020

## “Should We Avoid Excessive Salt Consumption”

According to the American Heart Association, an estimated 103 million Americans—nearly one-half of all US adults—have hypertension, which puts them at increased risk for life-threatening complications, such as heart attack, stroke, and kidney failure. Consuming too much salt makes it harder for the kidneys to properly remove fluid, which then builds up in the body and can lead to hypertension over time. The condition stiffens and narrows the blood vessels, which decreases the amount of blood and oxygen that flows to vital organs and, in turn, causes the heart to pump more blood in an attempt to make up for the shortage. Reducing dietary sodium intake is one of the most effective ways to reduce hypertension and its associated risks. Common foods can have hidden amounts of salt and cause unwanted effects. Stay away from foods that are notorious for their high sodium levels, such as frozen, prepackaged meals. In addition, keep an eye out for these 5 foods you might not have known are high in sodium. **Salad Dressing.** In 2009, researchers found that products in the salad dressing category had the highest mean and median concentrations of sodium per 100 g—1,072 mg and 1,067 mg, respectively. According to one cooking site, “Drenching salads with bottled dressing is pretty much akin to sprinkling salt on your mixed greens,” as most dressings pack as much as 300 mg to 500 mg of sodium into just one 2-tbsp serving. **Shrimp.** People may not know that this seafood is high in sodium, containing about 111 mg per 100 g serving, according to the USDA. The shrimp’s saltwater habitat is not the only reason it is so high in sodium. Fresh-caught shrimp are typically soaked in a salty brine within minutes of being harvested from the ocean. **Vegetable Juice.** Most fresh veggies are naturally low in sodium. But processed vegetables, like those found in vegetable juice, are a clear exception. Vegetable juice contains about 52 mg of sodium in an 8-oz serving. Eat your veggies fresh or turn them into a drink at home by using a blender or food processor. **Canned Vegetables.** A can of green peas has 310 mg of sodium per serving, or about 13% of the daily recommended intake. Fresh peas, on the other hand, have just 7 mg per cup. **Tortillas.** While a corn tortilla contains just 13 mg of sodium per 1-oz serving, white flour tortillas have 194 mg for the same serving size. Adding chicken, cheese, and lettuce to your tortilla pumps up sodium levels to a whopping 601 mg.

In the America that I love, we will remember that past salt intake claims have been both unrealistic and too cautious. Use common sense.

**Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.**

Surgeon/Scientist/Patient Advocate

27439 Highway 441, Kentwood, LA 70444

985-229-6955 Home | 985-229-3760 – Fax | 985-514-0578 – Cell

[rhowesmd@hughes.net](mailto:rhowesmd@hughes.net) | [www.iwillfindthecure.org](http://www.iwillfindthecure.org)

