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**About Salt Part 1**

**Joe**

**This is Health Matters, taking a look at salt in the human diet.**

**Kristen**

**Salt has long been restricted for people with high blood pressure and other health problems. Like other dietary taboos, the questions surrounding the use of salt are complex. Salt in the diet is similar to cholesterol. Once cholesterol was considered a cause of cardiovascular disease. Now it depends on which type of cholesterol you’re talking about.**

**Joe**

**Like cholesterol, salt is essential to good health. Our bodies are about 72% water and 28% mineral salts and other material -- such as bacteria, proteins and fatty acids. These all exist together in a delicate balance of fluids. As one writer explains, we have two oceans of water inside us. One inside our cells and the other outside our cells. Health depends on maintaining the balance between these two oceans.**

**Taushona**

**And salt regulates that balance. A current debate about dietary salt revolves around the difference between natural, unrefined salt and salt that has been bleached, demineralized and treated with chemicals. The health question used to be: how much salt is too much? A more contemporary question has to do with the type of salt you eat. Namely, which is better for you -- natural, unrefined salt with trace amounts of minerals or ordinary table salt? Or does it make any difference?**

**Kristen**

**According to some experts, natural, unrefined, unprocessed salt is vital to health and ordinary table salt can undermine health. But all agree that we need salt. Salt performs many tasks in the body. One of which is stabilizing irregular heartbeats.**

**Joe**

**Salt is vital for balancing sugar levels in the blood as well. It is vital to extracting excess acidity from cells. It is vital for clearing mucus and phlegm plugs in the lungs and sinuses.**

**And salt is a natural antihistamine. Salt performs all these functions when salt and water are balance. This balance is essential to preventing muscle cramps and sleep regulation. It prevents gouty arthritis, varicose veins and spider veins on the legs and thighs.**

**Taushona**

**The right balance of salt to water is also essential to bone structure. It’s what keeps them firm. The salt and water balance is critical to brain cell function. Communication and information processing depend on it. Even osteoporosis is related to a salt imbalance, specifically to a salt and water shortage in the body.**

**Kristen**

**At this point in our processed food lifestyle, too much sacauses high blood pressure. But, according to natural salt advocates, it’s refined table salt that upsets the salt and water balance which regulates blood pressure.**

**Joe**

**Experts claim that too much refined salt not only upsets the balance, it actually causes water retention. Edema, as it’s known. Edema happens, according to this viewpoint, because chemically treated salt does not combine with body fluid.**

**Taushona**

**At the same time, many nutritionists and health institutions say the difference between natural salt and processed demineralized salts in minimal. Yes, ordinary table salt has been demineralized but , they say, we can get the trace minerals we need from foods.**

**Kristen**

**Maybe, the other side says. Industrial agriculture, with all its fertilizers and pesticides, has de-mineralized the soil. So non-organic fruits and vegetables actually have fewer trace minerals.**

**Joe**

**Which could explain how the salt and water balance was maintained in hunter gatherer people who that didn’t have access to salt as we know it. Hunter gatherers got the salt/mineral compounds they needed from wild game, roots, wild nuts, seeds, fruits and greens. Clearly they were healthy and vibrant enough to evolve the human body into the species we are today.**

**Taushona**

**So yes, early man got sufficient salt from food sources. But it’s estimated that humans have been adding salt to food for at least 8,000 years. Before the Europeans arrived, some Native American tribes made salt by boiling brine from salt springs. Colonial Americans soon did the same. By the time of the Civil War, thousands of workers were producing tons of salt from brine obtained by drilling beneath the surface of the earth for salt water reserves.**

**Taushona**

**We’ll continue our report salt in the modern diet next week. So stay tuned.**

**Joe**

**Health Matters is a production of KIDE Hoopa CA.  Produced and written by Cynthia Poten. Engineered by Joseph Orozco.  Our readers were Kristen Marshall, David Moon and Joseph Orozco.  For this audio and more information, visit our download area at  www.kidefm.org. Thank you for listening. Your health adds to the health of our community.**

**Sources and Links**

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