

Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

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May 2022

Ask the Agent

Q: How can I reduce my blood pressure without going on medication.

A: First and foremost, follow your doctor's advice. If medication is needed, then take it and, over time, work with your doctor to change your lifestyle and eating habits with the goal of weaning yourself off the medication. High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a serious condition that can lead to many negative outcomes.

Untreated hypertension causes damage to blood vessels over time. This can lead to other health complications such as stroke, kidney failure, impaired vision, heart attack, or heart failure.

Focus on what your doctor recommends. Physicians will often recommend a balance of medication, healthy eating, and physical activity. If you follow their guidance, in time you may be able to reduce and stabilize your blood pressure and, with doctor's approval, give up the medication while continuing with a healthy and active lifestyle.

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at: **785-238-4161**

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HEI & YOU

May 2022

Other than being necessary nutrients needed for a healthy body, what do potassium, calcium, dietary fiber, and Vitamin D have in common? According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025 (DGA), these four nutrients are considered "dietary components of public health concern." They are designated as such due to low intakes of these nutrients in the general U.S. population being associated with health concerns.

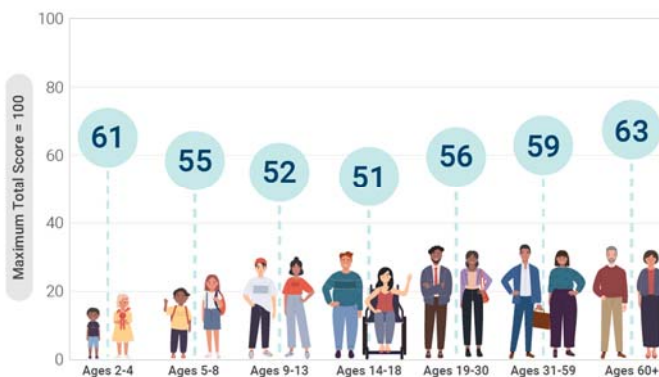


A person who follows a healthy dietary pattern – full of vegetables, fruits, beans, and whole grains combined with low-fat dairy and protein foods can meet their body's need for most of these nutrients. Increasing vitamin D through natural sources alone is more difficult. Consuming foods that have been fortified with Vitamin D (such as Vitamin D milk) can help you consume an adequate level. In some cases, Vitamin D supplements are needed when there is limited exposure to sunlight due to use of sunscreen or climate.

The DGA uses a variety of research sources to help identify how well Americans are consuming a healthy diet. One way of expressing this information is found in looking at the Healthy Eating Index or HEI. The United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service defines HEI as "**a measure of diet quality used to assess how well a set of foods aligns with key recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.**"

There is a considerable shift in a person's HEI from one life stage to another. As noted in the chart below, people age 60 years or older typically have an average HEI of 63 while those ages 14-18 average an HEI of 51. The higher the HEI number, the higher quality the diet is. This means that, in the United States, little over half of our youth ages 14-18 are getting all the nutrients their body needs on any given day.

Adherence of the U.S. Population to the *Dietary Guidelines* Across Life Stages, as Measured by Average Total Healthy Eating Index-2015 Scores



NOTE: HEI-2015 total scores are out of 100 possible points. A score of 100 indicates that recommendations on average were met or exceeded. A higher total score indicates a higher quality diet.

Data Source: Analysis of What We Eat in America, NHANES 2015-2016, ages 2 and older, day 1 dietary intake data, weighted.



Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025

Over the summer, I will share information about each of the nutrients, potassium, calcium, dietary fiber, and vitamin D. An awareness of a nutrient's food sources and uses in the body can help you make choices that will increase your intake of these important nutrients. Healthier dietary pattern = healthier body.

U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025*. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at: DietaryGuidelines.gov.

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Family & Consumer
Sciences

Confronting Hypertension

Family Nutrition

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a serious disease which causes your heart to work harder than it should to move blood to all parts of the body. If left untreated, high blood pressure can raise your chances of developing a stroke, heart attack, kidney and eye problems, and even death. It affects almost half of all adults in the U.S. That is an alarming number.

What can you do to prevent high blood pressure? One of the easiest ways is to reduce salt and sodium in your diet. If you have high blood pressure, lowering it can reduce your chances of heart disease and stroke.

You may be asking, isn't salt and sodium the same? No. Because the two words are used interchangeably, people are often confused about the difference. Sodium is a mineral that combines with chlorine to form salt. It is a necessary nutrient that helps your body maintain proper fluid balance, regulate blood pressure, transmit nerve impulse and help muscles relax. Salt or sodium chloride is a naturally occurring compound that contains 40% sodium and 60% chlorine. Salt is used to season foods and is the primary source of sodium in our diet.

Most of the sodium in the daily American diet comes from processed or prepared foods. The remaining comes from salt added at the table, while cooking or in restaurant meals. Today, Americans consume an average 3,400 mg per day. That is almost 50 percent more than is generally recommended. The goal is to consume no more than 2,300 milligrams per day That is roughly about 1 teaspoon of salt.

We have control over our sodium intake. The first thing we should do is decide that we're going to limit our intake; then take action. We must become smart shoppers and not purchase foods high in salt and sodium.

Start by reading the food label to see what is in the food you are about to eat. Compare labels of similar foods to determine which has the lowest Percent Daily Value for sodium and purchase those foods. Buy foods labels "reduced sodium", "low sodium", "sodium-free", or "no salt added".

Eating fresh fruits and vegetables instead of salted chips and crackers will help lower your salt intake. Many times, it is the texture and crunch that you are craving instead of the salt. If you do choose chips and crackers, look for those that are lower in sodium.

Choose fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables without added salt. Remember that salt is used as a preservative.

When preparing foods at home, use a "lite" salt that has half the sodium of regular salt, and use less seasoned salt when you cook. Instead of salting your foods, use spices and herbs or low-sodium seasonings like sodium-free bouillon or onion powder, garlic powder, and sodium-free seasoning blends. If you are using garlic

salt, onion salt, etc., you are adding salt to the food. Instead, try sprinkling lemon juice over your vegetables for extra flavor. Or instead of seasoning or marinating meat with salt-based products, use onion, garlic and your favorite herbs before cooking to bring out the natural flavors.

If you will make one change at a time, reducing salt in your diet will be easier to attain. It can be as simple as leaving the saltshaker in the cupboard. Salt is something you learn to like, and you can "unlearn" your taste for salt. Start with small changes and you will slowly lose your desire for the salty taste. If, after you have tasted your food, you need to add more salt, add one shake, not two or three.

When eating away from home, it can be more challenging. You must take control at the restaurant. Ask for sauce and salad dressing to be served on the side.

Once you have begun to reduce the amount of sodium in foods that you consume, you will notice the salt flavor when you do eat a salty food. Remember, salt is an acquired taste.

For more information, check out the article "Diet and Hypertension" found on the Geary County K-State Research & Extension website at: <https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/>

This simple Spicy Salt Substitute is great on meats and vegetables. I keep it in my spice rack and use it instead of adding salt while cooking or at the table. To save money while preparing your own seasoning mixes, visit spice stores which purchase spices in bulk and sell by the tablespoon.

Spicy Salt Substitute

- 5 tablespoons onion powder
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon celery seed

Mix all ingredients together and store in a cool, dry place. Add in place of salt.



HYDRATE!!

Last week's high temperatures and humidity left some areas in the region facing a heat index above 105°F. It caught many of us off guard that we would be facing such extreme heat when just the week before (the first week of May) had temperature levels that kept us in heavy jackets! Sigh...but that's Kansas for you!

Heat and humidity make for a challenging foe when trying to fight off dehydration. Being aware of the weather forecast along with the predicted heat index is critical to survival in the heat of late spring and summer in Kansas!

When the heat index and/or temperatures are high, even a few minutes outside can leave you feeling light-headed and thirsty. Taking a preventative approach when it comes to staying hydrated will help you stave off the ill-effects of dehydration. By the time your body sends a signal to your brain that you are thirsty, you may already experience symptoms of dehydration.

There is no one size fits all when it comes to staying hydrated. Your body size, weight, clothing choices, age, level of activity, and certain health conditions can all impact how much your body needs to stay hydrated. Water is the best solution when it comes to staying hydrated. However, fruits and vegetables can also be a good source of water. You can eat them fresh and certainly get nutritious fluid into your body, but also cook them as part of a meal which also provides you with essential vitamins, minerals, and electrolytes that help nourish the body.

Melons such as watermelon, cantaloupe or honey dew are hitting your super market displays. These each have a water content of around 90%. Cooled melon slices in the heat of the day are refreshing and rehydrating making them a double win.

Tomatoes are another good source of water. Full of flavor and nutrients, tomatoes are about 94% water. Chop up some ripe tomatoes and add diced onions, peppers, cilantro and a squeeze of lime to make a tasty salsa that will please the palate.

Don't forget about cucumbers! Fresh cucumbers from the garden or the local farmer's market are a staple in many homes. They have one of the highest of water contents for vegetables at 95%. You can eat them as a quick and cool snack as they are or you can dice them up into a salad or add them to a chilled pasta dish.

Other fruits and vegetables that are high in water include celery, zucchini, peppers, peaches and strawberries! Keep any of these fruits and vegetables handy at home so that you and your family can add fluid and essential nutrients to your daily eating pattern!

Cucumber, Corn, and Bean Salsa

Ingredients

2-3 large cucumbers
2 tomatoes
1 yellow bell pepper
1 small red onion
1/4 c. chopped fresh cilantro
1/2 c. black beans
1/2 c. fresh whole kernel corn, cooked
1 oz. package dry ranch dressing mix
1/8 cup cider vinegar
2 T. sugar, optional



Directions

Wash hands with warm soapy water for 20 seconds before starting preparation. Wash all vegetables. Finely chop cucumbers, tomatoes, pepper, and onion. In a large mixing bowl, combine vegetables with chopped cilantro. Drain and rinse beans and add to vegetables. Add corn. If using canned corn instead of fresh, drain off liquid prior to adding to vegetables. Set aside.

In a small bowl, mix together ranch dressing packet, vinegar, and sugar. Pour dressing over vegetables and mix well. Serve immediately or refrigerate until chilled. Makes 20, 1/2 c. servings.

Nutrition Analysis: 50 calories, 0 g fat, 130 mg sodium, 7 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 70% Daily Value of vitamin C and 6% Daily Value of vitamin A

Photo by [Mockup Graphics](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Fair Judging Resources

Summer is getting closer which means county fair season is almost here!

Would you like to judge foods or food preservation? There are some tips and tricks to being a judge and an educated judge can be a benefit to the exhibitor to give tips to improve exhibits. This is a great opportunity for you to teach others about creating final food products that taste great and look great.

Another important factor is food safety. While there are thousands of recipes to choose from, not all are appropriate for the fair.

Even if you aren't interested in judging, you can learn a lot from these interesting and informative recorded workshops!

Learn more at www.rrc.k-state.edu/judging/index.html

Geary County

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Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

****Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register****

May 2022

21 Geary County Walk Kansas program concludes.

June 2022

15, 29 Quick Meals for Busy Families IV—Join us for the fourth in a series of classes that focus on healthy meal preparation, menu choices, and stretching the food dollar. Bi-weekly on Wednesday evenings offered from 6—7:15PM at the Larry Dixon Center at 920 W. 6th St., Junction City. The program consists of 4—75 minute classes that will be offered in June and July. Space is limited! Contact the Geary County Extension office to pre-register for this class by June 6 to secure your spot!

July 2022

13, 27 Quick Meals for Busy Families IV continues!

**Mark your calendars for the 2022 Geary County Free Fair July 17—21, 2022
Open Class Fair Books are in! They can be picked up at the Geary County Extension Office.**



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