A Tip for Parents: Tell Teens to Go Easy on the Salt

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Next time your teen reaches for a salty snack, remember this: Adolescents who reduce their daily salt consumption also significantly decrease their heart disease and stroke risk in adulthood, according to data presented at a recent American Heart Association meeting and reported by Reuters.

Researchers based their results on a computer modeling analysis. It found that if teens cut their sodium intake by 3,000 milligrams (mg) a day, they could reduce hypertension by a whopping 30 to 43 percent in adulthood.

“The additional benefit of lower salt consumption early is that we can hopefully change the expectations of how food should taste, ideally to something slightly less salty,” said Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, PhD, the study’s lead author.

Teenagers consume almost 4,000 mg of sodium, more than any other age group. (Salt-laden pizza slices—a teen snack favorite—are one of the biggest offenders.)

But most of the salt we consume isn’t from our salt shaker—it’s from the sodium already in processed foods, said Bibbins-Domingo. (For example, one bag of Nacho Cheese Doritos has 310 mg of sodium.)

The American Heart Association’s current guidelines recommend limiting sodium intake to 1,500 mg, noting that too much salt can cause hypertension or high blood pressure, which can lead to heart attack and stroke.

The solution? It’s simple: Eat less sodium. Just by doing this, teens could cut their risk of coronary heart disease, heart attacks and strokes.

Parents can help their snack-fiend teens by stocking up on low-sodium, all-natural snacks such fruits and veggies.

Click here to learn other ways to reduce you and your teen’s heart disease risk.

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