

# Dear USDA and HHS: Lower calories, not salt!

*By ACSH Staff — February 1, 2011*

The USDA and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released [new dietary guidelines](#) [1] on Sunday. In addition to standard recommendations like eating more veggies and fish while reducing overall calorie intake, HHS calls for lower salt consumption across the board. According to the new guidelines, adults should reduce their daily sodium intake to 2,300 milligrams, while those who are over the age of 51, or hypertensive, or suffering from diabetes or kidney disease, as well as all African-Americans, should stick to consuming no more than 1,500 milligrams.

“1,500 milligrams?! This recommendation, in addition to the 2,300 milligram standard for the most of us, is both unrealistic and highly inappropriate!” notes ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross. “Isn't the USDA aware that humans' sodium intake has consistently [remained around 3,700 milligrams](#) [2] over the past 50 years, even as the incidence of hypertension has increased in the population? Further, most people will be unable to adhere to such a draconian diet because low-salt food is generally so bland. Worse, such an extreme sodium restriction can also lead to harmful health effects in some people. As for combating obesity, the USDA wisely advises portion size control as a means of reducing calorie intake.”

Moreover, adds ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, there is limited evidence that a reduced sodium diet alone can reduce hypertension. “Not everyone is salt sensitive, and most people require pharmaceutical interventions to keep their blood pressure under control. Also, many get their salt from processed foods as opposed to the salt shaker. Monitoring salt intake from these foods can become complicated, making these recommendations unfeasible for most.”

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## Links

[1] <http://yourlife.usatoday.com/fitness-food/diet-nutrition/story/2011/01/New-US-diet-guidelines-urge-less-salt-more-dairy/43092924/1>

[2] [http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.1973/news\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.1973/news_detail.asp)