How to reduce sodium without sacrificing flavor

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Featured topic and speaker

Salt isn't the only way to make food taste great.

Shayla Nettey, MD, shares her favorite seasonings, herbs, and cooking hacks that can help reduce sodium without sacrificing flavor. Learn how ingredients like garlic, basil, thyme, cumin and smoked paprika can support healthier eating habits and help you manage high blood pressure.

You'll also get practical grocery tips and advice on using canned and frozen foods to make healthy meals easier and more affordable.

Not sure how to amp up your food without salt? Here’s a recipe to get you started:

Low Sodium Taco Topper: Creamy Avocado Crema

Ingredients

- 1 whole ripe avocado
- 1/2 cup of Plain Low-Fat Greek Yogurt
- 2 minced Garlic Cloves
- 1 tablespoon Fresh Lime Juice
- 1/2 Fresh Cilantro Leaves

1. Place all ingredients into a blender. Blend until smooth and creamy.
2. Drizzle over veggie tacos

Find out what else doctors want patients to know about high blood pressure.

URL: https://patients.ama-assn.org/public-health/prevention-wellness/how-reduce-sodium-without-sacrificing-flavor
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Speaker

- **Shayla Nettey, MD**, hospitalist, Moses Cone Heatlh System; co-founder, Cooking on Purpose Health

Transcript

Dr. Nettey: Being able to control high blood pressure actually starts in the kitchen. And here's why.

Hey, Dr. Nettey here. And today, we're going to talk about blood pressure.

Blood pressure is the force of the blood as it's going through the arteries. If it's too high, it means that you can have a lot of issues with your heart, which can cause a heart attack, with your brain, which can lead to things like stroke. How can we use food to help us manage our blood pressure?

You probably think salt is the main thing that gives flavor. But you can use other spices and other seasonings and then consider salt last.

I know this is hard to accept, but we do not need to use salt all the time. I love salt. It's great. But we're going to focus on instead is all of this. My favorite of these two is this, smoked paprika. It's just bell peppers that have been crushed up and dried out. This is cumin, which I've actually only been using for the past few years. I like to use this a lot for my tacos, Mediterranean-style dishes.

You want to stay away from your all-purpose seasonings because they tend to have a lot of this added into it. And you want to control how much salt you're having in your dish. So now, we've got basil. We got some thyme, which adds a beautiful flavor to dishes. Now, one I didn't mention, which is my favorite, garlic.

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You just need one clove, usually. I tend to use four or five.

I can hear someone saying, OK, you've mentioned spices. You talked about your herbs and your vinegars. What about salt substitutes? The thing you have to be mindful of, especially if you already have kidney disease on top of high blood pressure, is that it contains potassium, which is something you definitely don't want to have too much of when you have kidney issues.

Frozen vegetables, frozen fruit, they're perfectly fine. A lot of times, they're frozen at their peak level of ripeness. So sometimes they're fresher than the actual stuff that's in the produce section of your grocery store. Now, this brings me to our canned items. So this is actually canned beans. They weren't low sodium. So a lot of times, people are nervous about using this. But there's nothing wrong with canned as well.

All you got to do is pour it, let it drain off the juices. Then you take your faucet here, your water, and you just rinse it, OK? And when you do that, you're rinsing off not all of the sodium. It's not going to be perfect. But we're trying to figure out ways, how can we make this easier for ourselves? If you have high blood pressure, that you know your numbers, you're documenting it. You're looking at what medicines you're on, and you're talking to your doctor. And remember, small steps added up over time, that leads to progress.

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