Reducing Sodium to Improve Heart Health

Most Americans consume an average of 3,300 mg of sodium per day – far greater than the recommended limit of 2,300 mg. Excess sodium consumption can lead to high blood pressure, which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. About 80% of the sodium consumed comes from processed and restaurant foods. In 2011, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors adopted a motion requiring the Department of Public Health (DPH) to review and provide nutrition recommendations for all new and renewing food service contracts to ensure dietary requirements promote healthy nutrition. These nutrition recommendations may include requirements to implement a “gradual sodium reduction plan.”

SODIUM STANDARDS FOR PURCHASED FOOD

- **MEAT AND FISH**
  - Require canned and frozen seafood: ≤290 mg per serving
  - Require canned and frozen poultry: ≤290 mg per serving

- **GRAINS**
  - Require sliced sandwich bread: ≤180 mg per serving
  - Require all other baked goods (e.g., dinner rolls, muffins, bagels, tortillas): ≤215 mg per serving
  - Require cereal: ≤215 mg per serving

- **VEGETABLES**
  - Require canned or frozen vegetables: ≤290 mg per serving

- **CONDIMENTS AND SAUCES**
  - Require salad dressings: ≤290 mg per serving
  - Recommend “reduced” (per FDA definition) sodium soy sauce and other condiments

- **DAIRY**
  - Recommend purchasing cheese: ≤215 mg per serving

*Standards are based on multiple sources: Federal Drug Administration (FDA); American Heart Association’s Recommended Nutrition Standards for Procurement of Foods and Beverages Offered in the Workplace; New York City Food Standards - Meals/Snacks Purchased and Served; and Massachusetts State Agency Food Standards.

Implementation

The Los Angeles County Sodium Reduction Initiative* assists County of Los Angeles departments and their contracted food vendors with implementing these requirements. To maintain product taste and quality, reduction of sodium should be carried out gradually. In some instances sodium reduction requires a gradual change to maintain product taste and quality. DPH will provide technical assistance to each department within one year of contract execution to gradually reduce sodium.

Programmatic Monitoring and Evaluation

DPH will provide programmatic monitoring and evaluation to assist vendors in adhering to these sodium content standards. Upon request, vendors may be asked, and are required to provide, food procurement records (e.g., product lists, food production records, sales reports) for monitoring purposes.

*The Los Angeles County Sodium Reduction Initiative is a program focused on reducing population sodium intake to limits recommended by the U.S. 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
Sources


5. County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors. (March 22, 2011). Healthy Food Promotion in LA County Food Services Contracts.

Need Technical Assistance?

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