

September 12th, 2012

According to a study of more than 12,580 American adults, over 99% consume more than the recommended level of sodium while only 2% meet healthy recommendations for potassium.

US DIETS ARE TOO HIGH IN SODIUM AND DEFICIENT IN POTASSIUM

Diets high in potassium and low in sodium are known to decrease the risk of hypertension and other adverse health conditions. Several agencies, including the American Heart Association (AHA), Institute of Medicine (IOM), US Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Agriculture (USDA) have published guidelines that recommend limiting sodium while increasing intake of potassium rich foods.

New research published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition examined the estimated daily sodium and potassium intakes by sociodemographic and health characteristics and compared them to current recommendations.

The study involved 12,581 adult older than 20 years who participated in NHANES in 2003-2008. The Researchers used 24-hour dietary recalls and other data to estimate the sodium and potassium intakes, which were adjusted for day-to-day variations using measurement error models.

Overall, 99.4% of US adults consumed more sodium daily than recommended by the AHA (<1,500 mg), and 90.7% consumed more than the IOM Tolerable Upper Intake Level (2,300 mg). In adults at higher risk for hypertension and related issues (African Americans > 51 years, people with hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease), 98.8% consumed greater than the recommended 1,500 mg/day. Overall, 60.4% of this population consumed greater than 3,000 mg/day, more than double the recommendation. Conversely, only 5% of US men, and only 2% overall, met the recommendations for potassium intake (>4,700 mg/day).

This research shows conclusively that regardless of recommendations, sociodemographic or health characteristics, the vast majority of US adults consume too little potassium and too much sodium. Increasing potassium rich, low sodium foods like fruits, vegetables, low fat dairy and whole grains, is an important strategy to help improve health outcomes for adult Americans.

Mary E Cogswell et al. Sodium and potassium intakes among US adults: NHANES 2003–2008 Am J Clin Nutr September 2012 vol. 96 no. 3 647-657.