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Toss the salt on July 4th

Cut your risk for high blood pressure and kidney disease by limiting salty foods this summer

ROCHESTER, NY – You can enjoy your barbecue and improve your health by adding low-salt dishes to your cookouts this summer.

Fresh meats such as beef and chicken, for example, have less salt than processed meats such as hotdogs, sausage, bacon and ham.

Consuming too much salt, after all, can lead to high blood pressure and kidney disease.

“One in nine adults has kidney disease, so it is critical that we spread the word that people can significantly improve their health by reducing salt intake by just a half teaspoon per day,” said Jan Miller, division president, National Kidney Foundation Serving Upstate New York. “By our estimates, more than 139,000 people in our nine-county area suffer from kidney disease.”

Health agencies nationwide are waging campaigns to reduce the use of salt. In Rochester, the National Kidney Foundation Serving Upstate New York and Excellus BlueCross BlueShield are teaming up to educate the community about salt through the foundation’s “Toss the Salt” program.

The Toss the Salt program coincides with the launch of a community coalition led by the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency and Rochester Business Alliance to educate the community about high blood pressure, a condition aggravated by salt consumption.

Here are tips for cutting salt from your summer barbeques:

- Throw that cut of beef on the grill – just don’t slather it in salty marinades and seasoning.
- You could concoct your own seasoning and marinades, swapping out salt for spices such as garlic, onion powder and pepper. (See recipes below.)
- Visit the farmers’ market for fresh fruits and vegetables for those salads and sides.
- Hide the salt shaker. Keep that watermelon and corn on the cob salt free.
- Fresh meats have less salt than processed meats. But eat red meat in moderation. Healthier grilling options include turkey burgers, salmon fillets and shrimp kabobs.
- Limit the salt you add to cole slaw and macaroni and potato salads.
- Offer low-sodium baked beans and unsalted popcorn, pretzels, tortilla or corn chips.

“Our concern is that many people are unaware of their risk for this debilitating disease,” said Carl Devore, M.D., associate medical director, Excellus BCBS. “Kidney disease, after all, is usually a ‘silent’ condition with no symptoms until it is too late. Anyone with high blood pressure or diabetes is at risk.”

More than 237,000 Rochester-area adults have high blood pressure and more than 71,400 adults have diabetes, according to Excellus BCBS reports.

Most people don’t get their salt from the salt shaker, but from packaged and processed foods and restaurant meals. Federal guidelines advise most people to consume no more than 1,500 milligrams of sodium daily. Kidney disease that is found and treated early can prevent more serious complications, such as heart attacks, strokes and death.

For more information:

The National Kidney Foundation Serving Upstate New York’s Keep Your Kidneys Going Strong classes are available to the community. These classes include the Toss the Salt program and include tips on cutting salt from your diet. For more information, call (800) 724-9421.

Go to the National Kidney Foundation’s website at www.kidneyup.org. For Excellus BCBS’ diabetes and high blood pressure reports, go to www.excellusbcbs.com/factsheets.

Low or no salt summer recipes:

Grilled vegetables with olive oil Cut washed vegetables into small pieces. Brush them with olive oil and put them on kabobs or wrap them in heavy duty foil and put them on the grill. Large vegetables can go directly on the grill. Zucchini, squash, asparagus, peppers, and mushrooms grill well and are delicious when marinated, drizzled with oil, or seasoned with spices. Skip the salt.

Seasoning recipe Blend the following ingredients in a shaker and sprinkle on your food: 5 teaspoons onion powder; 1 tablespoon garlic powder; 1 tablespoon paprika; 1 tablespoon dry mustard; 1 teaspoon thyme; ½ teaspoon white pepper; and ½ teaspoon celery seeds.

Dry rub (instead of bottled marinade) In a large bowl, combine ¼ cup each of cumin, paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, chili powder and ground pepper. Add ½ cup dark brown sugar. Mix all ingredients together. Pour into a clean and dry mason jar and store tightly sealed until ready to use. When you are ready to use the rub, pour out the amount required and rub and press the mix over the meat. Wrap meat in foil and store overnight in the refrigerator.

Cucumber and watermelon salad In a large bowl, toss 3 cups of peeled and cubed (½ inch) seedless cucumber and 3 cups cubed (½ inch) seedless watermelon with 3 tablespoons of fresh lime juice and 1/8 teaspoon of pepper. Serve immediately.

Cole slaw In a small bowl, whisk together 1/3 cup mayonnaise, 1 tablespoon cider vinegar, 1 tablespoon sugar, ½ teaspoon celery seed and 1/8 teaspoon pepper. Toss this dressing together with one package of cole slaw mix. Serve immediately, or store in the refrigerator for up to two days.

Potatoes on the Grill Add 1 pound of small new potatoes (cut into quarters, not peeled) to a microwave-safe bowl. Sprinkle 1/8 teaspoon paprika and 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper on potatoes. Cover, ajar, (so steam can escape) and microwave on high for five minutes. Stir after 2 minutes. (You can par boil potatoes if you prefer not to microwave.) When the barbecue is hot,

arrange potatoes on foil sprayed with non-stick cooking oil or use a grill pan. Close hood and cook for 15 minutes, turning the potatoes as they brown.

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The National Kidney Foundation, Inc., a major voluntary health organization, seeks to prevent kidney and urinary tract diseases, improve the health and well-being of individuals and families affected by these diseases, and increase the availability of all organs for transplantation. Go to www.kidneyup.org

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