

From Our Dietitian:

Balancing Sodium and Potassium for Heart Health

Sodium and potassium are two minerals that work together to control fluid balance and blood pressure. Most Americans are known to consume too much salt or sodium as a result of a diet that has become heavy in high sodium processed foods. When we consume a diet that is high in sodium the excess sodium enters our cells along with water which sets the stage for increased pressure on our arterial walls. This increased pressure over time can lead to stiffness, vasoconstriction of the arteries and high blood pressure.

More and more we are learning how important potassium is in lowering blood pressure. Potassium causes sodium pump stimulation in the cells, which relaxes blood vessels and allows blood to flow freely keeping blood pressure levels in the normal range. The more potassium we consume, the more sodium is excreted through urine and out of the body. Although consuming more potassium can definitely help blunt the blood pressure raising effects of sodium, it is not an excuse to not be concerned about the amount of salt in your diet.

Some foods naturally contain sodium however more than 75% of the sodium American's consume come from processed foods such as canned soups, cold cuts, rice and noodle mixes, and packaged snack foods. The sodium content of prepared and packaged foods can vary widely so be sure to read the Nutrition Fact labels on food items. Look for items that contain no added salt to help control your sodium intake.

The recommended daily intake of potassium for an average adult is about 4,700 mg per day. Potassium is only part of your total diet that that may affect blood pressure. Other factors that may affect blood pressure and heart health include the amount and type of dietary fat, cholesterol, protein and fiber, and calcium and magnesium.

Foods high in potassium include: Baked potatoes, sweet potatoes, bananas, oranges and orange juice, acorn squash, tomatoes, dried fruits, leafy greens, whole beans, salmon, yogurt and avocado. By following a healthy whole foods diet, most people can meet their potassium needs through diet. For best absorption and nutrient balance, it is always best to obtain nutrients through diet rather than supplements.

Persons with certain medical conditions such as kidney disease or who take certain medications may need to use caution in consuming high potassium foods and supplements. Because potassium affects fluid balance in the body and our kidneys become less efficient to remove potassium from our blood as we age, it is best to speak with your healthcare provider before increasing potassium in the diet or taking a supplement. Salt substitutes which often contain potassium chloride can also be harmful with certain medical conditions and with certain medications, so again it is best to check with your doctor before using salt substitutes.

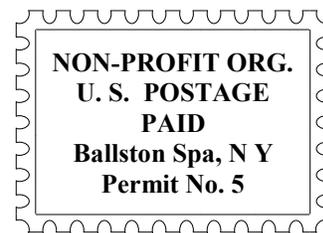
RSVP Medical Transportation Program

The Office for the Aging along with RSVP has a program to help Saratoga County seniors get to medical appointments inside and outside the County. This is an additional service to the regular senior transportation the Office for the Aging offers. Call 884-4100 for more information on the RSVP Medical Transportation Program.

Nutritional Program Weather Closing: If the home delivered meals are canceled due to the weather, the information will be listed on your local T.V. Stations. It will be listed under **Saratoga County Senior Meals.**

Saratoga County Office for the Aging
152 West High Street
Ballston Spa, N. Y. 12020

Return Service Requested



*Saratoga County Office for the Aging is funded by Title III of the Older Americans Act,
New York State Office for the Aging, the County of Saratoga and local Municipalities*

How do I read my Explanation of Benefits notice?

If your Medicare Advantage plan includes prescription drug coverage, you should receive two kinds of Explanation of Benefits (EOB) notices: one that explains your recently received health care services, and a second kind that summarizes your prescription drug usage in the past month.

Keep in mind that your EOB is **not** a bill; it simply states the health care services you have received over a period of time and the amount you have paid or should expect to pay for them. You will receive a separate bill directly from your provider for any amounts you owe them. Read your EOB to verify that you received all health care services listed, and check that you have paid the proper amounts to your provider. If you overpaid your provider, contact your plan to correct that mistake.

Be sure to note whether or not the EOB has denied payment for any health care services. The EOB should either contain instructions for filing an appeal, or instruct you to read your "Notice of Denial of Payment," which can be mailed along with your EOB, or separately.

Your EOB for prescription drugs must always come on a monthly basis. The prescription drug EOB will list what the plan has paid for a prescription, and what you paid for that prescription at the pharmacy. It will also include what you have paid out-of-pocket for prescription drugs for the year, as well as your Part D coverage phase—which can be deductible, initial coverage, coverage gap, or catastrophic coverage. If your plan denies payment for your prescription, you should receive a notice immediately at the pharmacy counter. This notice gives steps for starting an appeal.

The EOB is similar to the Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) that people with Original Medicare, the traditional Medicare program administered directly by the federal government, receive every three months. However, if you have Original Medicare and a stand-alone Part D plan, you will receive an EOB from your Part D plan for prescription drugs that you have filled each month.

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