



Healthy Inside Beauty Outside

SALT: How it affects our health and how to manage it?



High blood pressure, also known as hypertension is a silent killer because it almost does not show any symptoms. It is defined as persistent elevation of systolic blood pressure (BP) of >140 mmHg and/or diastolic BP of >90 mmHg. According to the 4th National Health and Morbidity Survey year 2011, the prevalence of hypertension in Malaysians has been raised to 32.7% for those aged 18 years and above.

Extensive studies have revealed that the higher the blood pressure, the greater the risk of developing heart attack, heart failure, stroke and even kidney diseases. Hypertension is dangerous because it makes the heart work harder to circulate blood throughout the human body at all times. This will contribute to arteries hardening as well as weakened arteries to burst and eventually leads to heart failure.

How excessive salt affects our health?

Salt in another word, sodium, works on kidneys to make our bodies retain water. However, excessive salt intake will cause too much water being stored in the body, which will raise BP and strain on the kidneys, arteries, heart and brain.

- Kidney

Hypertension can cause damage to the blood vessels and filters in the kidney, making removal of waste and extra fluid from the body difficult. This may then raise the blood pressure even more. Furthermore, the raised of waste in the body over time will overload the kidney and may lead to kidney failure.

- Arteries

Increasing blood pressure can lead to arteries bursting or becoming narrower, which will slow down oxygen and nutrients uptake into the cells and organs. Organs will be starved, deteriorate and become fatal if left untreated.

- Heart

Hypertension is one of the major contributing co-morbidities for heart diseases. High BP usually causes the arteries walls to thicken and weakened. This will result in narrowed arteries and restricted blood flow. Over time, the weakened blood vessels might burst or become blocked and the part of the heart did not get the nutrient it needs which then causes the part of the heart to die off. That is when chest pain occurs and heart attack follows.

- Brain

High blood pressure will also cause blood vessels in brain to rupture, and may lead to dementia and stroke in severe cases.

Tips for reducing salt intake

It is recommended that sodium intake should be less than 2400 mg per day, which is equivalent to 6 g of salt.

- Choose fresh fish, and lean meat, rather than processed meat like luncheon meat, ham, bacon, sausages
- Choose fresh vegetables and fruits instead of pickles
- Buy foods with labels like “no salt added”, “low in sodium”, “reduced salt”
- Use natural condiments to add flavour to your food e.g vinegar, herbs, spices, lemon & lime
- Cook rice and pasta without salt. Avoid instant or flavoured rice, pasta and cereal mixes, which usually contains added salt
- Check food label to ensure product is low in salt (<1.3g) when purchasing

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