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Can a Little Umami Seasoning Help with a Big Health Problem?

The Surprising Relationship between Umami, Salt and High Blood Pressure. High Blood Pressure: "The Silent Killer"

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE: "THE SILENT KILLER"

Usually, when you show up for a doctor's appointment, one of the first things that happen is someone puts a blood pressure cuff on your arm, puffs it up and makes a note on your chart. If you're lucky — and healthy — that's the only time you have to think about your blood pressure. For others, however, the doctor might tell you that your blood pressure is high and you should watch what you eat or exercise more.

Checking blood pressure is so normal that it's easy to take for granted. But actually having high blood pressure — in medical terms, "hypertension" — is very dangerous. In fact, according to Mayo Clinic, roughly half of the people with untreated hypertension will die of heart disease, such as heart attacks, and another third can be expected to die due to stroke⁽¹⁾. Furthermore, high blood pressure has no noticeable symptoms. This is why the doctor checks it every chance he or she gets.

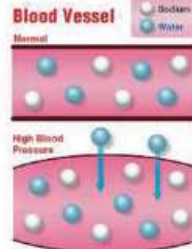
Despite our knowledge of the dangers of hypertension and our ability to keep it under control through diets, exercises and effective medications, hypertension is on the rise in countries throughout the world. In 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the prevalence of hypertension among adults at least 18 years of age was 20% for females, and 24% for males⁽²⁾. It is estimated to account for 9.4 million deaths worldwide every year⁽³⁾. That's 13% of all deaths of any cause⁽⁴⁾.

In addition to placing a heavy burden on patients and their families, hypertension also places a heavy burden on society in the form of healthcare costs. In the United States, the annual cost of hypertension is estimated at US\$54 billion⁽⁵⁾. To put that giant number in perspective, that's enough money to give a thousand dollars to each and every person in the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia⁽³⁾.

But there is some good news. Not every country is experiencing an increase in hypertension, and one of the countries that's bucking the trend is Japan, where the prevalence of hypertension has been steadily decreasing since the 1960s. One of

the causes of this positive trend is thought to be an improvement in diet — in particular, a decrease in table salt intake.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TABLE SALT AND HYPERTENSION

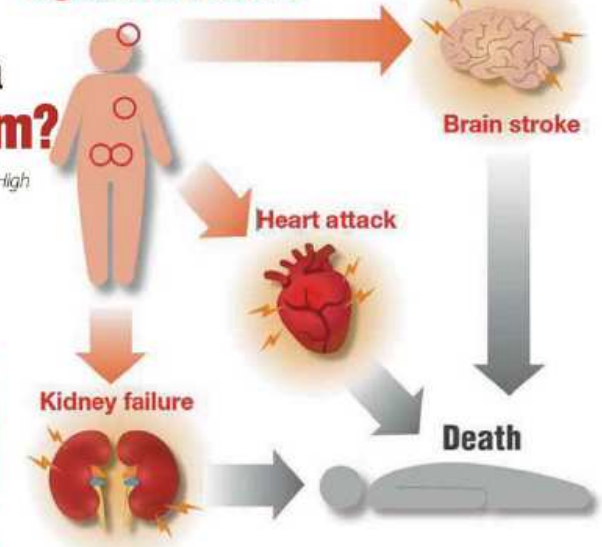


Sodium is essential for human health. Without sodium, we wouldn't be able to contract our muscles and our nervous systems wouldn't work because we wouldn't be able to transmit nerve impulses. In addition to being essential for individual health, it can also be argued that salt has been responsible for our survival as a species. In ancient times, food was not always available — a harsh winter could spoil the hunt and a dry spring could spoil the harvest. As a result, for thousands of years, humans have used salt as a preservative for food, including meats, butter and even bread, thereby guaranteeing a year-round source of nutrition.

However, it's widely accepted that excessive consumption of table salt can lead to hypertension. How can something that's crucial for our health also be responsible for "the silent killer" high blood pressure? In short, the more sodium that's in your body, the harder it is to eliminate excess water from your blood. Simply put, this means that there's more fluid in your bloodstream and, therefore, higher pressure.

Salt consumption is only one contributor to high blood pressure, but compared with some of the others, like heredity or stress, it's easier to control. That's why WHO issued a guideline that people should eat less than 2 g of sodium per day — the

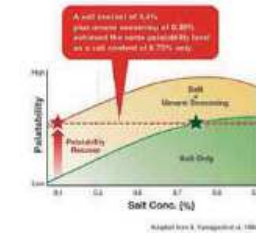
High Blood Pressure



equivalent of about 5 g of table salt⁽⁶⁾. Furthermore, WHO member states agreed to reduce the salt intake of the world's population by 30% by the year 2025⁽⁷⁾.

CAN UMAMI SEASONING BE PART OF THE SOLUTION?

Umami Seasoning Can Reduce Sodium Intake by Approximately 30%.



Umami seasoning (monosodium glutamate, MSG) is not table salt. MSG contains 12% sodium, compared with a 39% sodium content in table salt. In addition, compared with table salt, a much smaller amount of MSG is required to make food taste delicious. Together, these two points mean that the total amount of sodium intake from umami seasoning is substantially smaller than that of table salt.

This leads to an interesting question: Due to the comparatively small amount of umami seasoning

required to make food delicious, together with the comparatively small amount of sodium content in umami seasoning, can the use of umami seasoning help people reduce their salt intake?

According to at least one study, the answer appears to be "Yes." Subjects evaluated the palatability of a Japanese clear soup seasoned using table salt, and another seasoned using less table salt and umami seasoning. The result showed that with the addition of umami seasoning, the same level of palatability could be achieved using 30% less salt⁽⁸⁾. We at Ajinomoto Co. Inc. (Ajinomoto Co.) believe that we can achieve a similar reduction in salt intake for a wide variety of traditional dishes around the world.

OUR PROMISE

Salt intake reduction is one of the most cost-effective measures that countries can take to improve people's health outcomes. If salt consumption can be reduced by 30% by the year 2025, an estimated 2.5 million deaths resulting from hypertension can be avoided every year⁽⁹⁾. We are solemnly committed to contribute to this worldwide effort through evidence-based communication and demonstration

of how to effectively use umami seasoning as part of a healthy, balanced and lower-salt diet.

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