



## How Much Salt Are You Really Eating?

**Y**ou probably know that too much salt is bad for you. But even if you're not eating high-sodium foods and not using the salt shaker at the table, you're probably still eating more sodium than you think. In fact, studies show most of us eat two to three times the amount of sodium considered healthy. Experts advise eating no more than 2,300 mg of sodium daily.

A diet high in sodium can cause high blood pressure, which may lead to heart disease, stroke, and congestive heart failure. Even people who don't have high blood pressure are at a greater risk for these problems if they eat a diet high in salt.

While you expect salty foods, such as pretzels, to contain lots of sodium, it also pops up in a lot of places you probably wouldn't suspect. Biscuits, bagels, and

other baked goods are usually high in sodium. Other culprits include canned beans and vegetables—unless you're choosing unsalted versions. Choosing frozen foods may be a convenience for a busy lifestyle, but make sure to check the sodium content and figure it into your daily meal plan.

Here are some other examples of surprisingly high-sodium foods:

- Chocolate pudding (½ cup) ..... 417 mg
- Tomato pasta sauce (1 cup).... 1,203 mg
- Rye bread (1 slice)..... 211 mg
- Baked beans (1 cup) ..... 856 mg
- Fried fish fillet, breaded or battered ..... 484 mg
- American cheese (1 oz)..... 422 mg
- Canned chunky vegetable soup (1 cup) ..... 1,010 mg ●

### IN THIS ISSUE

**page 2**  
**Super-Pill to the Rescue**

**page 3**  
**Sexual Dysfunction: Treatable for People with Diabetes**

**page 4**  
**High Blood Pressure—The Silent Killer**

**page 5**  
**Tips for Better Posture While Sitting**

**page 6**  
**What to Do When COPD Worsens**

**A final tip: Make smart choices. If you are having something high in sodium at dinner, choose more fresh foods for breakfast and lunch.**





### “I’ll Have the Cholesterol-Cutting Combo, Please”

Changing your diet can be an important step in lowering your cholesterol. In fact, one study showed that certain foods eaten in combination can be very effective.

All the people in the study ate a low-fat diet. They also ate these four types of food daily:

- About ¼ tsp. of margarine enriched with plant sterols
- About 1 tbsp. of oats or barley
- About 1 ½ tbsp. of soy milk or soy protein
- About 1 oz. of whole almonds

Eating these foods led, on average, to about a 13% drop in LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol, which lasted over a one-year period. And, about one-third of subjects lowered their LDL by 20% or more.

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## Super-Pill to the Rescue

Cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins have been hailed as wonder drugs in the fight against heart disease.

With heart disease as the number one health risk for U.S. adults, ask your doctor if a statin is right for you.

### What Statins Do

Your liver makes cholesterol by combining the fat you eat with an enzyme. All statins block this enzyme, so cholesterol production drops way down. This means far less cholesterol is flowing in—or clogging up—your arteries.

Statin currently on the market include atorvastatin, fluvastatin, lovastatin, rosuvastatin, and simvastatin. But if they all do the same thing, why are there so many? Four reasons:

1. Each statin works a slightly different way, though the result is the same.
2. Each statin is available in different strengths and dosages.
3. Your body may react differently to one statin than to another.
4. Competing drug companies make statins.

The statin that’s right for you is the

one that works best at a price or copayment you can afford. Also, keep in mind that as patents on name-brand versions expire, more generic statins become available. These are often half the price of name brands.

### Lower Cholesterol Begins with Healthy Choices

Your doctor can decide if your cholesterol level is too high by testing your blood. Everyone age 20 or older should have this done at least once every five years. But it’s not just a numbers game. Your doctor will carefully consider not only your cholesterol, but also your risk for heart disease.

Statin usually perform best when combined with a healthy lifestyle.

If you’re prescribed a statin, concentrate on following these healthy practices:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Choose lots of fruits and vegetables for a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet.
- Aim for at least 30 minutes a day of exercise on most days of the week.
- If you smoke, quit, or at least reduce your cigarette usage. ●



# Sexual Dysfunction: A Treatable Complication for People with Diabetes

If you've lost interest in sex or are unable to become sexually aroused, you're not alone. Sexual dysfunction is common in both men and women with diabetes.

## Types of Sexual Dysfunction

A common complication for men with diabetes is erectile dysfunction—or impotence—when a man's erection may not be adequate for sexual activity.

Impotence can be caused by several factors. If you have diabetes, uncontrolled blood glucose levels, nerve damage, and blood vessel disease can contribute to this dysfunction. Emotional factors, such as stress or depression, low levels of the male hormone testosterone, alcohol use, and cigarette smoking can also cause impotence, even in men without diabetes.

Women who have diabetes may suffer from vaginal dryness. Poorly controlled blood glucose levels, damage to nerves and blood vessels, and low levels of the female hormone estrogen are common causes of this condition. Women with diabetes may also experience frequent vaginal yeast infections and pain during intercourse.

Certain medications may have side effects that cause sexual dysfunction. For both men and women, this includes

antidepressants, and for men, this includes medications such as high blood pressure drugs and tranquilizers.

## What You Can Do

There's a lot that women and men can do to improve their sexual health. For example, experts recommend that people with diabetes keep their blood glucose levels under control, don't smoke, and drink alcohol only in moderation.

It's also important to talk to your partner or a counselor, particularly if you feel depressed or under stress.

If you think your medicine may be affecting your sex life, talk to your doctor about changing your prescription.

## Treatments for Sexual Dysfunction

Sexual dysfunction is a treatable complication of diabetes. Treatment options for impotence include medications, mechanical devices, and surgical implants to improve erectile function. Treating low testosterone with oral drugs or hormone shots may also help men.

Women with vaginal dryness can use lubricants or ask their doctor about hormone replacement therapy (HRT), if they have gone through menopause. ●

## HEALTH TIP

Many people may find it hard to talk about their sex life. But treating a sexual dysfunction is an important part of managing your diabetes and taking care of your health and well-being.

## MONITOR YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE AT HOME

Blood pressure checkups are not just for the doctor's office. In fact, monitoring your blood pressure at home can help you manage it even better. There are two types of monitors for home use:

■ **Aneroid monitors** are manual and work with a stethoscope. You read a dial gauge for your blood pressure.

■ **Digital monitors** are automatic. They display your blood pressure on a screen.

When buying a monitor, make sure you can read the screen or gauge. If not, ask the pharmacist to help you. If it uses a stethoscope, make sure you can hear your heartbeat. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist what size cuff you need.

Monitors cost about \$25 for a basic aneroid to over \$100 for a digital one with extra functions. You can find a variety of monitors at most drugstores and medical supply stores.

After you buy a monitor, take it to your doctor's office. Your doctor or nurse can check it for accuracy and make sure you are using it correctly.

## High Blood Pressure— The Silent Killer



**N**early one in three Americans has high blood pressure. But only about one-third know it. High blood pressure is called the “silent killer” because it has no signs or symptoms. You could have high blood pressure for years without suspecting it. Although you feel perfectly well, your heart is working dangerously hard.

Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure, kidney failure, and vision loss. What’s more, recent studies have shown that the risk for death from heart disease and stroke begins to rise at blood pressures as low as 115/75 after age 40. The risk *doubles* for every 20 mm Hg higher in systolic blood pressure (top number) or 10 mm Hg in diastolic blood pressure (bottom number).

The risk for high blood pressure increases if you are overweight, and if you are a man older than age 45 or a woman older than 55. Risk levels also jump up if you have a family history of high blood pressure or if your blood pressure is already just above normal. ●

**A final tip:** With proper treatment, including lifestyle changes, the effects of this silent killer can be prevented or reduced. But, the only way to find out if your pressure is high is to have it checked. Why wait? The sooner you know your blood pressure is rising, the sooner you can stop it.



### recipe: BEEF & BEAN CHILI

Adding beans to this recipe helps to lower the fat and cholesterol and increase the fiber in each serving.

- 2 lb lean beef stew meat (trimmed of fat), cut in 1-inch cubes
- 3 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 c. water
- 2 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp. flour
- 2 tsp. chili powder
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 2 lb tomatoes, chopped (3 cups)
- 1 tbsp. oregano
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 2 c. canned kidney beans\*

1. Brown meat in a large skillet with half of vegetable oil. Add water. Simmer covered for 1 hour until meat is tender.
2. Heat remaining vegetable oil in second skillet. Add garlic and onion. Cook over low heat until onion is softened. Add flour and cook 2 minutes. Add the garlic-onion-flour mixture to the cooked meat. Then, add the remaining ingredients to the meat mixture. Simmer ½ hour.

**YIELD:** 9 servings

**SERVING SIZE:** 8 oz

**EACH SERVING PROVIDES:**

calories: 274, total fat: 10 g, saturated fat: 2 g, cholesterol: 65 mg, sodium: 159 mg\*, carbohydrates: 8 g

\* To cut back on sodium, try using “no salt added” canned kidney beans, or use beans prepared at home without salt.

**SOURCE:** National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health



Deborah Zimmerman, MD  
ForeSee Health Medical Director

## Q&A: Ask Dr. Debbie

**I know it's important to keep my blood pressure under control. How long do I need to stay on my medication?**

Most people need to be treated for high blood pressure indefinitely.

**L**ifelong treatment is usually necessary because your blood pressure remains lowered only while you are taking medicine.

Generally, blood pressure is treated with medicine that is easy to take and has few or no side effects. While taking pills may be frustrating at times, stopping or reducing treatment on your own is dangerous. It can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, heart failure, and vision loss. There are many types of high blood pressure medicine, so talk with your doctor if you are troubled by your current prescription.

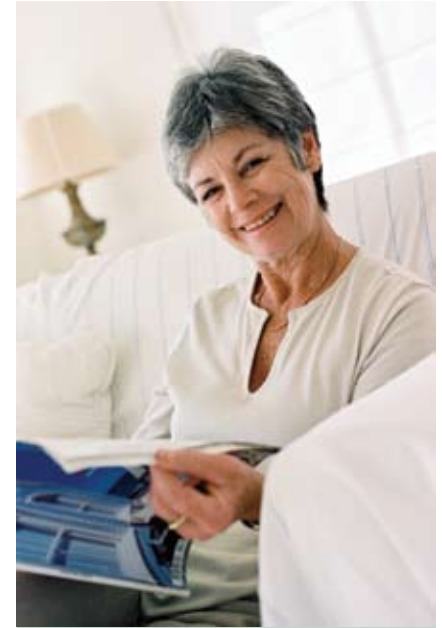
Medications can successfully treat high blood pressure in most people, allowing them to live long and healthy lives. Adopting smart lifestyle habits will help, too. It might even reduce the amount of medicine you need.

In addition to taking your medicine as prescribed, follow these healthy tips:

- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products.
- Limit your intake of fat, sodium, alcohol, and caffeine.
- Stay a healthy size. Ask your doctor what your target weight should be.
- Get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, such as a brisk walk, on most or all days.

- Avoid cigarettes and other tobacco products.

Keep in mind that medicine only works when you take it regularly. Take it at the same time each day. Don't skip days or cut pills in half. If it's hard to remember to take your pills, visit the American Heart Association website for a helpful chart. Go to [www.americanheart.org/cardiacrehab](http://www.americanheart.org/cardiacrehab), click on "Managing Your Medicines," then "Medicine Chart." If you don't have Internet access, you can call ForeSee Health at 314-214-8409 or 877-436-7373 to order a copy. ●



### Tips for Better Posture While Sitting

Here are some ways to make your body more comfortable when you are sitting for long periods of time:

- Pay attention to posture. Sit straight, back against the chair, and feet flat on the floor. If your chair doesn't support your lower back, use a special support pillow—or even a rolled-up towel. Keep your shoulders and neck relaxed.
- Vary your routine so you aren't sitting for a long stretch of time. Make a phone call, water the plants, or throw some clothes in the dryer.
- Give it a rest. Take short breaks every hour or so to let your muscles relax. Gently exercise arms, wrists, neck, and shoulders.



# What to Do When COPD Worsens

- Being more short of breath than normal
- Coughing up more mucus than usual
- Having mucus that's changed from its typical color to a yellow, green, or rust shade

If you experience any of these symptoms, don't wait to see if you get better. Call your doctor right away. In addition, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if:

- You have trouble coughing up sputum.
- Breathing is difficult.
- You feel confused, dizzy, or faint.
- Your heartbeat is very fast or irregular.
- It is hard to walk or talk.
- Your lips or fingernails turn blue or gray.
- Your sputum contains blood.

Because you know your body better than anyone, only you can know when your COPD may be headed for a flare-up. Always be aware of how you are feeling, what you are coughing up, and how well you are breathing. ●

**M**any patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) can manage their condition successfully. However, there are times when COPD symptoms flare up or worsen. This is not uncommon, but it is serious. Prompt treatment is critical to avoid serious illness or a hospital stay.

What causes a COPD flare-up? Sometimes it's an infection, like a cold, or exhaustion. Exposure to air pollution or to very hot or cold weather can trigger one, too. It is important to know the warning signs so that you can seek treatment. These include:

## HEALTH TIP

**Don't hesitate to call your doctor when your condition changes.**

**We want to hear from you!** What topics would you like to see in *For Your Health*? Please e-mail [info@foreseehealth.com](mailto:info@foreseehealth.com), or write us at ForeSee Health ATTN: Newsletter Department 14528 S. Outer Forty Road, Suite 300, Chesterfield, Missouri 63017.



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