



DROP THE **PRESSURE**

Heart health & blood pressure as part of type 2 diabetes management

Diabetes and cardiovascular health

If you have type 2 diabetes you have an increased risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and if you are from an African or Caribbean background you are particularly at risk of having a stroke. Having high blood pressure can also increase your risk.

The good news is that there are lots of things you can do yourself to reduce the risks - this includes making changes to your diet as well as keeping physically active.



Starting with salt

A lot of the traditional African and Caribbean dishes are high in salt, which raises your blood pressure. In addition people of African and Caribbean descent may be more sensitive to salt than people of other ethnicities. The good news is this means you can get more benefit from reducing your salt in your diet.

It is recommended that your daily salt intake does not exceed 5-6g. This is the same for people with or without type 2 diabetes. You may be surprised how much salt is in some of your favourite dishes. A study published in the British Medical Journal looked at the amount of salt in some takeaway dishes from restaurants across London. **An average bowl of jollof rice with fried plantain & chicken contains 8.6g of salt. That's equivalent to 20 packets of ready salted crisps!**

Meal	Average salt per portion (g)	London Borough where sample purchased
Jollof rice with chicken & fried plantain	8.6	Southwark, Lewisham, Newark, Greenwich, Hackney
Maize & fufu (banku) & groundnut soup	15	Haringey, Newham
Yam porridge & chicken	6.3	Greenwich, Barking, Dagenham, Southwark, Hackney
Amala With ogbono & fish	4.9	Southwark, Lewisham, Newham, Brent, Hackney
Rice & beans (waakye), meat stew & pepper sauce	12.0	Croydon, Haringey
Escovitch fish with steamed rice	6.3	Newham, Lambeth
Jerk chicken with rice & peas	7.6	Lewisham, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, Camden

(Heart Campaign 2010)



A takeaway portion of jollof rice, chicken & plantain can contain as much as 143% of the recommended daily salt intake (8.6g). An ackee & saltfish takeaway can contain as much as 6.8g in a single portion.

Cooking at home may also contain more salt than you think. Adding seasoning cubes is an essential part of many traditional dishes but **a cube may contain as much as 5.4g salt.**

Seasoning cube	Salt content
1 Knorr cube (8g)	5.4g
1 Maggi cube (4g)	2.6g
1 sachet ONGA classic	5.2g
1 sachet ONGA stew	5.0g
1 sachet ONGA Chicken	5.3g

(Heart Campaign 2010)

High salt level is more than 1.5g salt (or 0.6g sodium) per 100g

6g salt per day = 1 teaspoon



Taking steps to cut down your salt intake

Cutting down your salt intake can help lower your blood pressure in a matter of weeks. If you are used to adding salt to your food, cutting down gradually will help your tastebuds adjust. Eat lots of natural foods like low fat dairy, fruits and vegetables, fresh chicken, lean meats, fish and unsalted nuts. Reduce salt in seasoning and season with herbs and spices, pepper & chillies, use annatto seeds to flavour soups, stews and fish dishes, make your own curry powders. Jerked chicken and meat can be made with scallions, garlic, thyme, onion and lemon juice and doesn't have to use salt.

Gradually reduce the amount of salt you add to your everyday common foods, like rice

Stop adding salt to fry ups like plantain

Avoid adding salt to meals at the table

Watch out for salt content in snacks such as pastries, crisps and in takeaway meals

Switch salty snacks for lots of different fruit and vegetables

Reduce salt levels in cooking sauces (especially stews)

Avoid using seasoning cubes which contain high levels of salt

(Heart Campaign 2010)

Fats

Saturated fat found in red meat, palm oil and coconut oil, raises your cholesterol levels, increasing your risk of heart disease. Replace saturated fats with fats from nuts & seeds and from oily fish like mackerel.

Cut down on saturated fats

- Eat less red meat and cut off visible excess fat.
- Grill, bake and steam foods instead of frying.
- Eat low-fat dairy products, rather than full fat.
- Reduce or avoid using coconut oil, palm oil and other animal fats for cooking.

Increase monounsaturated fats and fish oils

- Use olive oil, sunflower & rapeseed oil for cooking.
- Eat meats that are naturally lower in fat e.g. chicken.
- Have 2 portions of oily fish a week.
- Increase your intake of nuts and seeds.



Fruits & vegetables

Fruits & vegetables are natural sources of potassium, as well fibre and other vitamins and minerals which help lower your blood pressure. You may know that you should eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day but **how much is a portion?**



3 tablespoons of vegetables e.g. okra, spinach, tomatoes

3 tablespoons of cooked beans or pulses e.g. Nigerian beans, black eyed beans, gunga beans, peas



1 onion

1 bowl of green salad

Small-sized fresh fruit: One portion is two or more small fruit, two kiwi fruit, three apricots, six lychees, seven strawberries or 14 cherries



Medium-sized fresh fruit: One portion is one piece of fruit, such as one apple, banana, pear, orange or nectarine

Large fresh fruit: one slice of papaya, one slice of melon (5cm slice), one large slice of pineapple or two slices of mango (5cm slices)

What about cassava, yam, plantain and sweet potato, they're vegetables too, right?



Even though potatoes, plantain, cassava, yam are all vegetables, they are classed as starchy carbohydrates and don't count towards your 5 a day.

*Pulses like beans do also contain some starch, but you can count 1 portion as one of your 5 a day.

Fruit juices and smoothies made with fruit have a lot of the fibre removed, or broken down, so the sugar they contain is released quickly into the blood stream. It is best to limit your intake of juices and smoothies if you have type 2 diabetes.

Other things to remember

Alcohol

Limit your alcohol to within the guidelines of 21 units a week maximum for men and 14 units for women. A unit is:

- a small glass of wine
- ½ pint beer or lager
- 1 25ml spirit shot
- 1 small glass of fortified wine (50ml)

Weight loss

If you are overweight even a small amount of weight loss (4.5kg or more) can help reduce your blood pressure.

Physical activity

Cardiovascular risk is reduced in people with type 2 diabetes if they undertake at least 150 minutes moderate level aerobic activity and 2 strength exercise sessions each week

Bibliography

Evidence-based nutrition guidelines for the prevention and management of diabetes , 2011 - Diabetes UK
Healthy Eating the African Caribbean way, 2007 - Blood Pressure Association
Salt Levels in African and Caribbean foods in London, 2010 - Heart Campaign