Understand Salt's Impact On Your Heart Transcript

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Introduction to Dr. Fuhrman and the salt topic

Well hello everybody. Welcome to Reversing Heart Disease Naturally Summit. My great pleasure to interview my co-host, Doctor Joel Fuhrman. You have to know him.

And hopefully you've seen some of the other great, opportunities we've had to converse together. But he is not just any doctor who's been doing this as a board certified family physician for over 30 years.

During that time, pretty, hard to compare to somebody who's had seven New York Times bestselling books, internationally recognized expert, the president of the nutritional research foundation PBS like star of stars, $70 million raised for PBS.

Quite an accomplishment. And be sure to look for his most recent book, eat for life, and pertinent to our, summit Reversing Heart Disease. Naturally, a great book that sits on my desk called The End of Heart Disease.

But Doctor Joel Fuhrman, welcome, Joel. Thank you for being here. My pleasure. It's been been a great talk about a topic that, you know, you can't live in a, Western society and walk into a restaurant or a vending machine or grocery store and not be exposed to the potential of being flooded with salt.

As an added ingredient. So we're going to focus on salt for this topic. How bad is salt for our health? What do we need to know? What do we need to learn?

I'm saying to people that it's very bad that they really got to get the salt out of their diet. It's an appetite stimulant. It makes it stimulates both thirst and hunger, and it makes you retain fluid.

And it leads to increased body fat independent of its effect on calories. It's like hard to believe. It makes you produce. It makes you way more over even though it doesn't.

Even if you're not eating more calories, it makes you weigh more and more fat on the body.

Why excess salt harms health

And it also makes you lose minerals because as you take an extra sodium now you sweat has a lot of sodium in it, and your urine has a lot of sodium in it, you're always pushing out sodium.

The body can't selectively excrete sodium independently of other minerals. It has to take all the minerals along with it. So now you're going to exercise and get a cramp in your leg.

And you chronically, you're going to be deficient in other minerals because your diet is so high in sodium. What I'm saying is there's a lot of mechanisms via which salt damages your health.

Even above, it's that most people are aware it raises blood pressure, but has a lot of other dangerous effects on the body besides this fact on just raising blood pressure.

You know, the the World Health Organization reports that they did a March 9th, 2023 report that said that, like sodium, is that the body it's the world's population decreased its sodium content, sodium intake by like 30%.

That would save 7 million lives. We're talking about how many people how many millions of lives, like 20 million people die every year because of excess sodium intake, and they're brainwashed by false information and people lying to them, telling them that salt is just okay for them, or even necessary.

You know, natural foods contain plenty of sodium. Other primates and chimpanzees and gorillas don't salt their food, and humans have been on the planet for 100,000 years.

We've only used salt for the last few thousand years. It was used in more ancient civilizations that we have record abundance, very small amounts. It's been increased.

Salt intake has been consumed 15 to 20 times as much compared to it was used 500 years ago or before that time. Salt was very hard to come by before 500 years ago.

That's what was so valuable. But the point is, humans never use salt in the manner and in the amounts that's used today. And it's a major cause a decreased career of increased cardiovascular death and shortened lifespans.

Oh, wow. Foods have natural salt. What what about natural salts? Yes. Food gives, like when we eat vegetables and beans and nuts and grain mushrooms and onions and lead, we get sodium.

But natural foods all have about less than half the amount of sodium per calorie, like a 200 calories of vegetables are not going to give you more than about 80 to 100mg of sodium.

So if you're eating, let's say, 2000 calories a day of food, you're getting about 800mg of sodium, less than half of the amount of calories from sodium.

For eating about 1500 calories a day, you're getting about 600 to 700mg of sodium from the natural food. That's the exact amount humans need. Humans need about 500mg of sodium a day around that level.

The exact amount you get from natural food, and you need the amount of sodium proportional to the amount of calories you need when you eat. Need more calories with more physical activity?

You need a little more sodium and you get that exact percent increase from the extra calories you need. So nature did not make a mistake. Nature put the precise amount of calories of amount of minerals in food that humans need when we eat real food, but the extra sodium we put.

So in other words, our diet is not deficient in sodium. If we don't salt our food, we're getting sodium from the food. But it's the additional sodium we get from our from additives that pushes up over a thousand a day.

That's where the danger occurs. You know what the most ridiculous thing is? That the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology, your, you know, compatriots here tell people with high blood pressure or heart disease to cut their sodium down to below 1500 milligrams a day.

And I'm saying that's like telling. That's like a long doctor telling people who have lung cancer to quit smoking.

Natural sodium in whole foods

My objection to that is if cardiologists and cardiac specialists recognize that lower sodium is beneficial, then why don't we have everybody learn it in the school rooms?

And why don't we have the whole population learn to keep their sodium down? Why do we wait to? People are sick and have advanced disease and then tell them to cut their sodium down.

The if what I'm saying, if it's good that they are developing disease, we don't wait for people to develop severe disease and then tell them to fix the sodium.

We should be telling the fix before they develop the disease, which would be. And we were successful in educating children not to smoke cigarets because smoking cessation and the use of cigaret smokers the the use of children and young adults smoking has gone down by more than 80% in the last decade, so much less people smoke cigarets because of the educational system.

On how we've tried to incorporate the anti-smoking masks in the school room, but we're not incorporating the antisocial message in the school room. We're waiting to people get seriously ill, and then we're telling them to cut back on sodium. If I only, absolutely.

It makes perfect sense. It's all about reactors. So when we talk about one of your more famous teachings, g bombs, I mean, we're not talking about salted versions.

There's going to be a small amount of sodium chloride in natural foods like g bombs, greens, beans, onions, mushrooms, berries and seeds, but just enough to maintain optimal health and optimal blood pressure.

That's right. I mean, you know, what's interesting is that there was a global burden of disease study in 2019 that showed that 22% of all deaths worldwide are caused by high sodium diets.

We're talking about a major degree of morbidity and mortality. And what I'm saying here is that the exposure to sodium doesn't just raise blood pressure.

It also is an irritant to the anything the lining of blood vessels. It causes microvascular injury like microvascular pinpoint hemorrhaging, which over the decades and years and years of excess salt intake has the effect to weaken the lining of blood vessels and perhaps increasing the risk of a hemorrhage or an aneurysm or, or of, you know, a rupture of the blood vessel wall.

And we know that, it's lifetime exposure to sodium that increases that risk of hemorrhage, and it's lifetime exposure to smoking that increases your risk of smoking related cardiovascular death or lung cancer death to it.

In other words, it's the doctors call it, take years.

Why salt restriction matters before disease develops

How many years of those three packs a day to day determines the risk? It's how many decades and years of the high sodium diet. And so that cumulative risk.

And I'm really suggesting the people that they've got to stop their sodium now. And because it's a process that damages the blood vessels for decades and decades and decades, they can't wait till they're 80 years old and then cut the sodium out.

It's not going to work well. You're not going to protect yourself. You have to. Now's the day to make the change. Now is the day to start, to put the years in off the sodium, to allow the blood vessels to start to protect themselves.

And, you know, so we're talking here about the fact that not waiting so you have high blood pressure because people are going to hear this because this is what people say.

They say, well, I don't have to work sodium because my blood pressure, my blood pressure is low or I'm not salt responsive, so I can eat all the salt I want.

My blood pressure doesn't go up and they think it's okay for them because they don't have high blood pressure. It's a silly salt. And I'm saying, well, number one, but 90% of Americans over the age of 70 have high blood pressure anyway.

And if all these people think their blood pressure is okay, they're going to go to the doctor one day. The doctors say we have high blood pressure. The person's going to say, well, I never had high blood pressure.

I don't have high blood pressure. It's always been told by it's low. Why is it all of a sudden high now? Well, the sympathetic tone eventually flips over and it starts to go up in later life.

And they they caused that by thinking they were okay with eating salt. You know, they had low blood pressure. You

follow me, they can't think it's okay because their blood pressure is okay to still consume.

So because eventually it's going to go up and it's still causing microvascular damage to the blood vessels, and it suppresses immune function and it increases risk of autoimmune disease, and it increases the risk of stomach cancer.

And it increases risk of hemorrhagic stroke, even irrespective of its effect on blood pressure. So we're talking here about the dangerous effects of high blood pressure, of salt eating.

And now's the time for people to cut it out because it also deadens your taste buds. And people will enjoy the natural flavor of food when they get used to getting salt out of the diet for a few months.

It's like people come to my retreat in San Diego and we feed them all delicious recipes without salt. And after they're here a month, they say, oh, the chefs up their game.

The food is so fantastic and I'm sorry was that way last month, too. It's just a you thought it was was it? You took a while for you to build a taste muscle back by cutting out the salt and also when they cut out the salt, it doesn't just build the taste muscle back for salt, it allows the body to experience other flavors they weren't getting the benefit of.

By having their diet be so high in salt. Okay, a lot of people are very excited about fermented foods pickles, sauerkraut, pickled vegetables, but they're often brimming.

Salt, blood vessels, and long-term cardiovascular risk

And so do you have any experience or comments about that? My comments are is that you can pickle make pickles out of cucumbers with vinegar. You can pickle things with spices and vinegar like we do here.

You don't have to put salt in foods to to make something pickle to make that flavor or to make something fermented. But yes, I, I'm avoiding the use of avoiding the use of those highly salted, fermented foods.

And don't forget that that salt increases the rigidity of blood vessels, especially in the brain. It cause it's it causes what's called cerebral small vessel disease.

It impairs and ethereal function. And of course, you know, this age related climb in blood pressure begins in childhood. So let's be clear here that if we look at populations that don't salt their food like the yano mano Indians in the Amazon jungles who are don't serve their food, you see that still, the childhood blood pressure levels are the same when you measure toddlers or teenagers.

They're the same blood pressure in this country, teenagers with higher blood pressure than toddlers, the blood pressure starts to go up. The levels of teenagers may not be above the level of medication.

We would medicate a person, but they're not normal for a teenager. We start to see the damage. The blood vessels occur all through life, and in these populations that don't salt their food, these primitive populations that are isolated from, from human civilization centers, they don't see the blood pressure in the elderly or the or the middle aged people being any higher than children.

They see the chronic low blood pressure of 90 over 60, 90 over 70, 100 over 60. They see those levels consistent all through life. And that's consistent with my experience, because I see a person 30 years ago with high blood pressure and put them on a new treatment with no salt, and over the years, their blood pressure gradually goes down to 100 over 70 or 90 over 60.

They don't start. They've got much lower blood pressure, even though the blood pressure was high and requiring medication over 2 or 3 decades, that blood pressure slowly reverses itself to normal again, like we see in the Yanomami Indians.

So we're saying here that people vastly underestimate the damage from salt occurring all through life. And also, that food tastes better without it. And now that you're off salt a while, you're not even going to like to have any salt in your diet. It's going to bite you.

We make you. When it makes you thirsty, it makes you not sleep at night. So now's the time to attack this and do it right. And that's really the purpose of us doing this summit, is to really motivate people to make significant change, to protect, to protect their lives and save lives.

I know you are a big fan of, seasonings and spices. Any particular ones? I mean, of course, you you have a veggie zest on your website, with garlic and herb seasoning blends.

Do you encourage people to substitute their salt for items like that? Not for sure. And we also, you know, use vinegars to flavor things to give them a salty flavor.

But my favorite, like, spice to give things flavor is to use roasted garlic.

Taste changes and salt-free cooking strategies

I put so many things with roasted garlic, you know, and I want and I roasted garlic with the paper on it. I want people to buy the whole garlic bulb and roast the bulb at like 325 for like a half an hour, because the paper and the and the coating helps the garlic, maintain its nutrient levels.

And then they can take the paper, a little paper off. They can use a serrated knife and cut the root end off. And they can squeeze it and pop the garlic out like toothpaste.

It pops right out of the whole bulb, like giving birth to a baby pops right out. That's my butt. Using roasted garlic in dressings and sauces. And I make all types of different sauces.

I'll make like a like a cherry concentrate drizzle on top of asparagus or something, or I'll make a roasted sesame garlic on top of a, you know, on top of broccolini or zucchini or we threw it yesterday.

We fried onions, you know, we fried onions. We put a little of the of like a vinaigrette of, vinaigrette in the, in the fried onion. And we put that on top of chopped zucchini.

You know, there's, we get incredibly great flavors without having to use salt. Okay. Well, I think this is, been important. And really, again, what you said from that international study, the Global Burden of Disease study, where, you know, maybe diabetes was the number one killer of men and women.

Maybe it's high cholesterol. But actually the data was it's high blood pressure. And we're talking about it, you know, millions and millions of people in this, recognition about salt and salt hidden in so many foods.

So read your labels, please, everybody, and find these, great strategies we're learning from, Doctor Joel Fuhrman. So. And also produce doesn't have labels.

We should be eating foods that don't have labels that are natural produce. And the other next thing is about Celtic salt and rock salt and sea salts and salts from the Rock of Gibraltar, the back of the moon and all the nonsense.

People think to make natural sauce, to think they're okay when they're the same amount of sodium in a mineral content is insignificant. It doesn't matter what the mineral content is.

Heroin is still heroin, even though it contains minerals in it. That was a powerful and, profound statement about a lot of nonsense out there about the pink salts and the other salts all over the world.

You can say Celtic or Celtic and Himalayan. So, thank you. I think everybody took a lot of notes on that and, learned a lot. And, we'll make some habit changes so that you can naturally have a excellent and healthy blood

pressure just by simply putting the salt shaker, out of your kitchen and getting rid of it permanently.

We're still talking about salt is salt, whether it's pink or from the moon. I think we're here to confirm and said. And why we want to, make a big focus in our nutrient and diet to have, a low salt, no salt approach.

So not confirming you were mentioning that there are populations that do well, but they don't have the amount of salt that the Western diet, the American diet has.

Maybe. Let's start there and just, share with the audience a little bit more about this sort of myth about the need for salt. And I want to talk to you about one micronutrient in a minute, but, you go forward.

Yeah. So we want to say that this myth that's built up that humans need salt or need to add salt to their diet, which keep in mind that throughout human existence on the planet, for the 100 thousands of years it's only been in recent history that we've used significant amounts of salt, which last, we're talking about the last few thousand years, the last 3000 years, and even even 500 years ago, they used about the population use less than 1/20 the amount of salt.

Hidden sodium, myths about specialty salts, and population evidence

So most of the years we're talking about tiny amounts of added salt, not the huge amounts we see today in the diet, which is so dangerous, and that primitive populations, including primitive early human species like caveman and Neanderthal man and pro magna men and early primates, did not salt their food.

And there are pockets of civil today in modern world, like the Catawba Island study and the on the primitive and populations that are more isolated from human civilization that, salt their food.

And there are people that also and know when these populations are studied, as we said, they don't have heart disease. And the Catawba Island study, they also show that there's almost no heart disease on the island.

People eating natural foods are also their food. Source is such a big contributor to heart disease. And the question is, is how much is okay? Or how much is still in the range of little enough?

That's safe. And we're talking here about, you know, the using 1/20 the amount or a little bit tiny bits. Okay. It's not that a little bit poisonous. It's the large amounts that are poisonous.

You know, if I have a nice piece of Ezekiel bread or a little bit of mustard or a little bit of a healthy ketchup or something, a little tomato sauce, it has some sodium in it.

I'm looking at the label, and I'm making sure I eat an ad within a couple of hundred, 2 or 300 over and above what my natural food diet contained. I still have some leeway to eat something that's in a jar or, you know, to put a sauce or something.

But I'm not going to pick the tomato sauce that has 800mg of sodium. I'm going to buy the one that has, you know, 250mg of sodium per cup. So I can take a little bit and only add an extra hundred, you know.

So in other words, we're saying here that the dye is going to give you somewhere between 500 and usually 800mg of sodium a day with no way that salt. And then if you add a little bit of sodium to your diet, a couple of hundred, you'll still be like under a thousand a day, because that's what the studies show they show.

And these are these studies are done, you know, a study by cardio, two cardiology groups looking at the decreased risk of heart disease with lower salt intake is days.

So cardiovascular deaths go down when sodium intake goes from 3000 to 2002 1500 to 1000. And after 1000 it kind of levels off. It's when you still see benefits when people drop from 1500 to 1000.

But once you go below 1000, generally speaking is you're fine. But in any case, what I'm saying here is that the American College of Cardiology says 1500 because they didn't think 1500 was ideal.

They knew when the literature, when you read the whole papers that a thousand was ideal. They picked 1500. They thought they couldn't get anybody to eat to what would be willing to give out all the salt up to go to a thousand.

And I'm saying the diet's great. You learn how to cook. It does great at keeping under a thousand. We can. And if we have heart disease, why not do what's scientifically determined to be the best for your future?

And that's you use no salt or just if you're going to use it, use something with salt in it. It's under a few hundred milligrams. That's it.

Iodine without iodized salt

Okay, I just have one follow up question because many people get the majority of their iodine from iodized salt. Brand obviously we know is Morton's. I know in your multivitamin for men and women you have iodine.

Any just parting comments about the importance of iodine and health and how to get it if we're not using it tonight? So. Right. Both too little iodine and too much iodine could both be a problem.

Both too little, too much. You want to hit that sweet spot just a little bit, like between 100 and 300 micrograms a day. The RDA is 150 micrograms. So if we're not going to slaughter food, we are getting some iodine from natural foods, particularly when they're, when they're grown in coastal areas.

But to make sure people nobody who gets Ireland deficient, we do recommend people expose themselves to at least 100 to take the RDA. And you can get that there's vegan foods that like, you can use, kelp is high in iodine and other seaweeds.

But, you know, we use our sample. Our supplement has 150 micrograms of iodine. Most people use that RDA so they don't have to rely on salt for their iodine.

And that's what we recommend to do. Take a supplement, read a little seaweed or a little kelp, but don't rely on salt for your either. Okay. Excellent. Excellent input.

And important I know I'm familiar has some role in breast prostate health, cancer health. And of course most people would come up with, thyroid health.

So don't be a iodine deficient human. And we've heard the good wisdom. Don't overdo it either. Have that sweet spot. So thank you, doctor Joel Fuhrman.

This really, really, information pack conversation about salt and why we want to focus on it and get our blood pressure naturally to the right level. There's been the reversing heart disease naturally summit.

Thank you for your attention. And we're going to bring back Doctor Fuhrman throughout this summit because, it is so lucky that we have him as a resource.

We'll see you in another session.