

SALT (SODIUM), HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, LESS THAN 12 % RULE, “WALKING ON CLOUDS”

She was a very intelligent and straightforward 50-year old African-American legal secretary from California. At 5'7", 207 pounds, her blood pressure was **180/104** when first was seen. I made clear to her how her personal choices were affecting her blood pressure, risk of stroke/dialysis/sudden death/heart attack, etc. horrors. She agreed to change. She returned for follow-up in one month 14 pounds lighter, with an improved BP but still high at 144/104, but now she felt like she was “walking on clouds.”

She had begun to read sodium/salt content on labels. Today I taught her the “**less than 12% rule.**” I showed her 5 cans that sit on my desk, all the same size, the typical 15 ounce can. Some of the manufacturers claimed there were 3 servings in the can, others 2 servings in the can, but in truth, all these cans were **one** serving per can. The sodium content was listed at 15% per serving on the first can of 3 servings, 2% sodium per serving on the second can of 3 servings, 4% per serving on the 3rd can of 2 servings, 12% per serving on the 4th can of 2 servings, and 6 % sodium per serving on the 5th can of 2 servings. The rule is: **NOT MORE THAN 12% sodium IN THE SERVING THAT YOU EAT!!** It has nothing to do with how many servings the manufacturer says are in the can or the package, it has to do with the **number of servings and their sodium content** that you eat. Said again, you should eat no serving that has more than 12% sodium in the serving that you eat (**12% or less of “Daily Values” for sodium intake as listed on the label.**) Be certain to calculate the salt (sodium) content of that occasional cookie or candy, or whatever else you eat. Foods such as brown rice, fresh vegetables, fruit and dry beans have—**NO SODIUM.**

Sodium causes high blood pressure!!! Japanese have the highest salt (sodium) intake in the world and they also have the highest incidence of stroke and Alzheimer’s disease due to their high blood pressure. There are cultures that have less than 500 mg of sodium intake per day, and these cultures have **no hypertension** (high blood pressure)!

To recap: it has nothing to do with how much sodium there is per serving, it has to do with how much sodium you are going to eat! In the first can there was 30% sodium and a person could (un)reasonably eat that whole can. Way too high! On the other hand, another can contained 2% sodium per serving with 3 servings listed per can which is only 6% sodium for the whole can--very low sodium. One can of soup had 6% sodium per serving, with 2 servings per can and that would be fine as it falls at the 12% rule (per serving that you eat) but the next can from the same manufacturer had 12% per serving, 2 servings per can which is 24% per can and that is too high. Most commercial canned foods have way too much sodium (salt) in them and even many health food soups and canned foods have too much sodium. That is why I prefer fresh (best) vegetables and beans or frozen (most convenient) flavored with a canned soup that is low in sodium (less than 12% sodium in the whole can). Despite frozen foods being lower in sodium, you still must read the sodium content per serving and then count (multiply) the number of servings that you will eat to see that your total sodium intake remains less than 12% from any one serving.