

## Watch that salt!

Much has been said about the amount of salt in and on our food. Why the concern? It is the sodium part of table salt which tends to raise eyebrows as well as blood pressure in some people.

The problem, is that sodium consumption is linked to hypertension (high blood pressure), a major risk factor in heart disease. Hypertension can affect blood vessels, the heart, brain and kidneys. It is thought that people with some forms of hypertension do not tolerate sodium well. If you are on a special diet be sure to follow your doctor's or dietitian's advice.

The average North American diet contains 10 times more sodium than the body actually requires because so-

dium occurs naturally in many foods and more is added in various forms: MSG (monosodium glutamate), soy sauce, baking powder, baking soda and seasoned salts, etc.

Excessive use of table salt is considered an acquired taste. You may be using more than you realize.

It isn't difficult to cut down the amount of sodium in your food.

Do it slowly to let your taste buds adjust.

Cook with less salt.

Put less on your food at the table.

Use other spices and herbs. Use celery seed in place of celery salt for instance.

Read the label.

## The embarrassing vitamin

The magical properties attributed to Vitamin E seem endless. Claims for this vitamin run the gamut of preventing heart disease, sterility, wrinkles and aging to curing muscular dystrophy, acne, cancer and emphysema. Laboratory tests on animals have verified some of these claims. Unfortunately such is not the case with humans.

Vitamin E is necessary for good health, however, it is not necessary to take an extra supplement in pill (or any other) form.

The reason? Vitamin E is found in many foods. Sufficient quantities can be provided by eating a wide variety of foods. Most of our vitamin E comes from fats and oils — especially from rapeseed, soybean, sunflower, corn, cottonseed and wheat germ oils.

Dairy foods, meat, fish, legumes, nuts, eggs, vegetables, fruits, cereals and breads provide lesser quantities of this nutrient. Consequently, few people suffer from a lack of Vitamin E.

Biochemically speaking (that's another way of describing what it does in the body) Vitamin E's role is very complex and its reactions are not well understood. There probably isn't another vitamin which has been so actively and intensively researched with so few concrete results. Vitamin E has been described as the only vitamin without a disease — and therein lies the embarrassment.

Basically all we really know is

- vitamin E is essential for humans
- it is widely distributed in our foods.

The basic function of alpha-tocopherol (the most potent form of the vitamin) is to act as an antioxidant by preventing molecules from combining with oxygen to form toxic peroxides.

Vitamin E may have therapeutic properties, but this is certainly not a do-it-yourself proposition. Taking massive doses on your own to cure whatever ill could lead to an excessive build-up in the body which might be dangerous.

If ever there was a reason for not extrapolating (or speculating on) results from animal studies, there isn't a better example than Vitamin E.

By depriving some test animals of Vitamin E, for example, a nutritional muscular dystrophy can develop. While it can teach scientists a great deal about the disease, it tells almost nothing about why it develops genetically in man.

In other words its like comparing Florida oranges with Ontario apples. They are long lost cousins but certainly not identical twins!

Because there are presently more questions than answers about Vitamin E, the controversy will go on for a long time.

## The merit of detergents

As a consumer, have you ever wondered how a laundry detergent actually works?

In simple terms there is a phenomenon known as surface tension causing water molecules to cling together and form droplets on surfaces, leaving dry patches between the droplets. The main function of a detergent is to reduce surface tension to allow water to wet fabrics thoroughly.

We've all used detergents and have questioned whether they will really clean the soiled fabric. Upon investigation, as well as increasing the wetting power of water, detergent also helps to suspend the dirt in the water. When soiled

fabric is agitated, oily dirt is broken up into smaller particles, each of which is surrounded by a film of detergent solution. As dirt is lifted from the fabric, the detergent holds it suspended in the water and helps to keep the dirt from settling back on clothes.

Now that there is some understanding of how detergents really work, one of the most important things for a consumer to do before washing, is to read the label. The amount of detergent used for a load of wash, determines the end result.