

# An Expanded Notion of Employee Wellness

## Eastern State Hospital Sodium Reduction Program



*"We are very likely to continue because we have created a new culture around healthy eating."*

*~ Dining Services Manager, Toby Walling*



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## The Challenge

As more people depend on cafeterias and restaurants for a large percentage of their daily food, it is important that these food outlets work towards sodium reduction. Food served at these locations often contain high amounts of sodium before they reach the plate. This can lead to eating more than 1000 milligrams of sodium above the recommended amount.

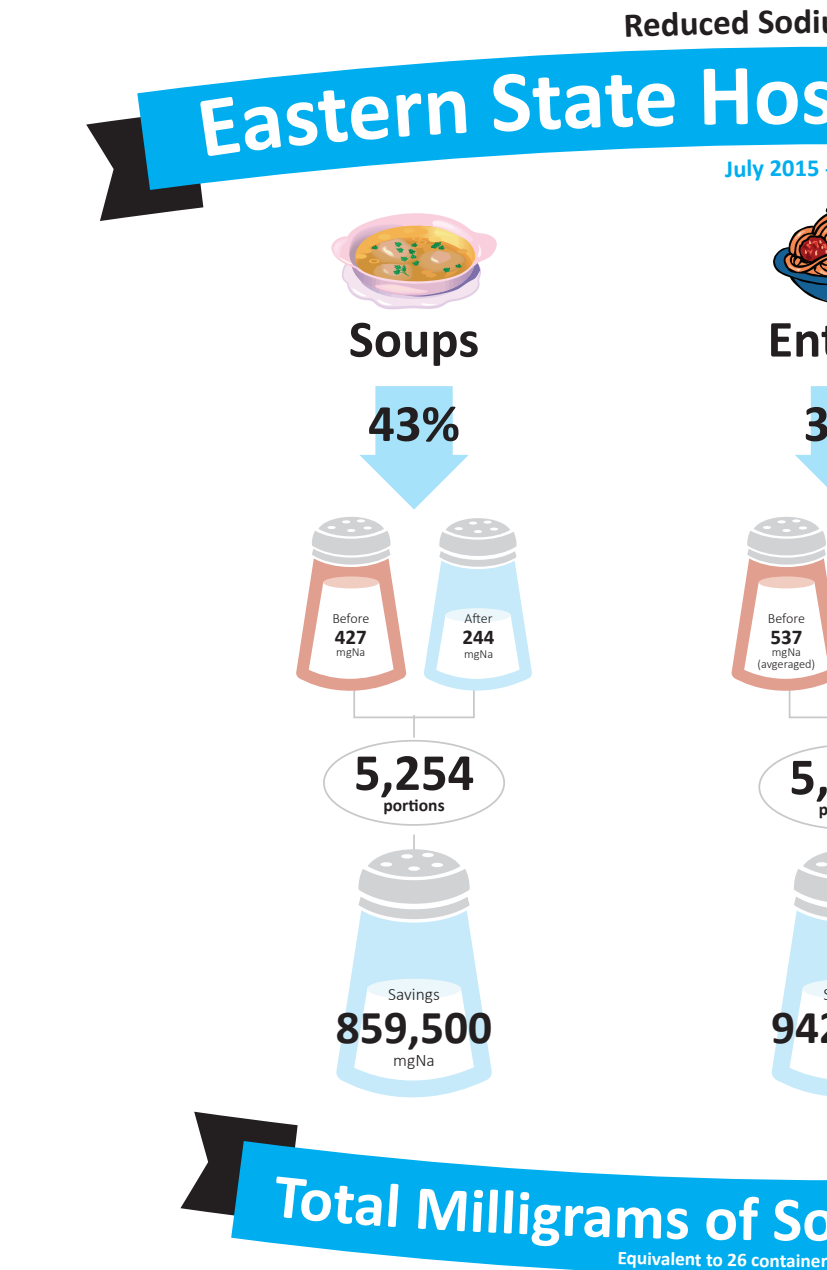
Lower sodium options are available but are often overlooked for fear of losing customers. Managers and cooks, in fast-paced food service environments, don't have the time to find lower sodium products and create recipes using these products.

In Spokane County, where one in three adults has high blood pressure, reducing sodium in the diet may be one way to help lower customers' blood pressure and their possible risk for heart disease and stroke.

## What Worked and Why

Eastern State Hospital Dining Services Manager, Toby Walling, and Food Service Director, Anita Murphy, demonstrated their commitment to employee health by being one of the first Washington State agencies to adopt Department of Health's Healthy Nutrition Guidelines. However, Toby and Anita realized that sodium reduction was one of the more challenging nutrition guidelines. Said Toby "We didn't realize how much salt was in cheese, soup, and ketchup, and that added salt (from a salt shaker) was not the main source of salt in diets."

As part of its Sodium Reduction project, Spokane Regional Health District Consultant Chef Duane Sunwold conducted two trainings for Eastern State Hospital kitchen staff. The first training focused on how salt adds up with ingredients like cheese and bacon bits. Through taste tests the staff were able to experience for themselves



how adding *more* cheese did not mean *more* flavor.

According to Toby, "We now talk about how portion size is a way to manage sodium. When I started managing the kitchen two years ago, cheese was one of the highest ingredient expenditures, now it is in line."

In the second training, Chef Sunwold spoke about the use of different cooking techniques like roasting to add flavor. He challenged staff to use herbs to develop flavors as part of a salad dressing recipe contest. The winning dressing is now on the café menu and one of the most popular choices among the employees.

Eastern State Hospital replaced their most frequently used high sodium products, such as soup bases and tomato products, with their lower sodium counter parts,

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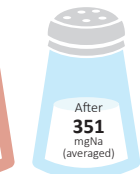
# Hospital Campus Café

August 2016



trees

5%

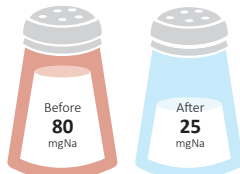


684  
portions

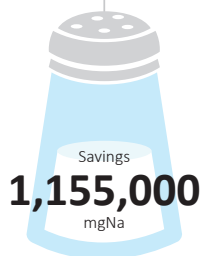


Ketchup

69%



21,000  
portions



## Sodium Saved: 2,957,930

(26 oz/ea) or 4,446 tsp of salt\*

\*allowance of salt for an adult is 1 tsp

and modified recipes to go with the changes. In addition to the recipe changes, Toby and his staff used attractive food presentation of fresh fruit and vegetables and healthy snacks which resulted in increased sales of these items.

## About Eastern State Hospital

Eastern State Hospital is an accredited and federally certified inpatient psychiatric hospital with 830 employees. As a State agency its' compliance with Executive Order 13-06, *Improving the Health and Productivity of State Employees and Access to Healthy Foods in State Facilities* is required. Eastern State's Employee Campus Café management and kitchen staff have gone above and beyond the fifty point passing score.

## Sustainability

The café changes resulted in a 30% sales increase in the first year and an additional 13% increase in the second year. Toby and Anita accomplished this by controlling food costs, keeping labor costs in line, and increasing their customer base.

When asked how likely they are to continue offering lower sodium options, Toby responded, "We are very likely to continue because we have created a new culture around healthy eating. We have expanded our customer base and it's financially successful. We have no reason to stop what we are doing."

Over the last year, new culinary practices, recipe modifications and lower sodium product replacements resulted in 2,957,330 milligrams of sodium savings. In common measurements this is 26 rounds (26 ounce) of salt or 4,446 teaspoons of salt.



Dining Services Team

# Spokane Regional Health District's Role

Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) worked with DOH and two other local health jurisdictions to implement a three-year Sodium Reduction in Communities grant (2014-2016) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). SRHD used the following methods to help partners make changes.

- Encourage organizations to follow Washington Department of *Health's Healthy Nutrition Guidelines* (or similar guidelines).
- Assist partners in identifying key recipes and strategies to reduce sodium by at least 25 percent.
- Work with food vendors to increase the availability and accessibility of lower sodium products.
- Help with signage and placement of low sodium foods to increase visibility and customer awareness while maintaining or increasing sales of these items.
- Increase food service directors and cooks' knowledge of hidden sources of sodium and offer culinary training to increase flavor enhancement skills.



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