



Just The Facts!

Be Salt Savvy – Cut Back on Sodium for Healthier School Meals

KEY ISSUES

- High blood pressure is increasing in American children.
 - Too much salt (sodium) is linked to high blood pressure. Reducing dietary sodium may lower blood pressure, which reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.
 - Cutting back on sodium in school meals can help children learn to enjoy the natural taste of foods. A lower sodium intake may provide health benefits that last a lifetime.
 - Implementing phased-in sodium reductions will take time. In 2014-15, schools are required to meet the following weekly sodium targets for school meals:
- | Grade | Lunch | Breakfast |
|-------|----------|-----------|
| K-5 | ≤1,230mg | ≤540mg |
| 6-8 | ≤1,360mg | ≤600mg |
| 9-12 | ≤1,420mg | ≤640mg |
- Schools may be required to meet lower sodium targets in future years. USDA will complete research and additional analyses before those targets are implemented in 2017.

Choosing foods that are low in sodium is important to healthy eating. Nearly all Americans have developed a taste for salty foods and consume more sodium than they need. When students taste salty foods on a regular basis, they learn to prefer salty flavors. By offering lower sodium versions of popular menu items and recipes at the beginning of a school year, students’ tastes can change. Adding less or no salt and using tasty sodium-free alternatives, such as herbs and spices, can help students learn to like foods with a less salty flavor. They may not even notice the difference!

Easy ways to follow the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Recipe for Success

Be salt savvy when planning and purchasing foods!

- **Serve more fresh foods** and fewer processed foods. Most fresh and single-ingredient frozen fruits and vegetables are naturally low in sodium. Minimally processed foods are typically lower in sodium, compared to more processed foods. Use old-fashioned rolled oats instead of instant oatmeal and baked fish instead of fried fish sticks.
- **Offer high-sodium foods less often.** Go easy on pre-prepared, processed entrées and side dishes, such as pizza and chicken nuggets. These are top sources of sodium in children’s diets. Use grilled chicken breast instead of cold cuts and other cured meats such as bacon, sausage, hotdogs, or ham.

When soliciting bids from manufacturers:

- **Specify that products be labeled “low-sodium” or “no-salt-added,”** containing no more than 140 mg per serving. Choose lower sodium or no-salt-added versions when purchasing popular processed foods. Select products that are also low in added sugars and saturated (solid) fat and contain no *trans* fat.
- **Read Nutrition Facts labels** to compare the sodium content for similar foods. Foods that are low in sodium contain less than 140 mg per serving or 5% Daily Value (DV). Choose products with the lowest amount.
- **Look at ingredient lists for other sources of sodium** such as monosodium glutamate (MSG), baking soda, baking powder, disodium phosphate, sodium alginate, and sodium nitrate or nitrite.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 140 mg	5%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 6g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 20%	Iron 4%

USDA Foods Program

USDA Foods has made great strides in reducing sodium across all food categories to help schools lower sodium in school meals to meet the dietary specifications. The canned and frozen vegetables and beans, including potato and tomato products, are low-sodium or no-salt-added. Additionally, USDA Foods meat and cheese options have reduced sodium profiles that are equal to or lower than similar commercial products. To view the list of available low-sodium USDA Foods, please visit: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/school-nutrition-professionals>.

- **Check the ingredient statement** and request any additional documentation from the manufacturer to ensure that the product meets “low-sodium” or “no-salt-added” criteria.

Prepare delicious low-sodium meals!

- **Use fresh or dried herbs, spices**, lemon or orange zest, or 100% fruit juices to enhance flavors in foods without adding sodium. Low-sodium seasoning blends/salt substitutes or flavorful veggies are ways to liven up your recipe without adding excess salt. Try herbs, garlic, or vinegar to season foods and spices and herbs like black or red pepper, basil, curry, ginger, or rosemary.
- **Drain and rinse canned**, precooked beans, or vegetables to remove even more sodium.
- **Modify recipes that use high-sodium ingredients** such as canned soups, tomato sauce or paste, spaghetti sauce, canned vegetables, chips, and taco shells. Use lower sodium or no-salt-added versions or use less. Remove salt from recipes whenever possible.
- **Incorporate foods that are good sources of potassium**, which may counteract some of sodium’s effects on blood pressure. Good sources of potassium include vegetables like sweet potatoes, beet greens, spinach, Swiss chard, white beans, potatoes, tomatoes, and soybeans and fruits like bananas, kiwis, dried plums, cantaloupe, honeydew, and oranges.

Use “Smarter Lunchroom” techniques to get students to eat more low-sodium foods!

- **Make the low-sodium targeted entrée the first entrée option** available in all service areas and on each designated line.
- **Position vegetables canned in water or prepared as low-sodium in front of higher sodium vegetables** on the serving line when more than one vegetable is offered.

Did You Know?

- Most sodium in our diet comes from eating processed and prepared foods, such as canned vegetables and soups, luncheon meats, and frozen entrees. Food manufacturers use salt or other sodium-containing compounds to preserve food and to modify the taste and texture.
- Some condiments, such as soy sauce, ketchup, and hot sauces, can be high in sodium. Adding them — either while cooking or at the table — can significantly raise the sodium content of a meal! If you use condiments, choose low-sodium varieties.
- Sodium that naturally occurs in meat, poultry, dairy products, and vegetables only accounts for a small percentage of our salt intake.

For More Information

Salt and Sodium

www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet14SaltAndSodium.pdf

Reducing Sodium Intake

www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20120102035310.pdf

Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbook for Schools

www.fns.usda.gov/tn/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbook-child-care-centers-0

Sodium Reduction

<https://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/menu-planning/sodium-reduction>

Smarter Lunchrooms

<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/healthierus-school-challenge-resources/smarter-lunchrooms>

Procurement in the 21st Century

www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=475

