



# A Pinch of Knowledge: Understanding Sodium Content in Food

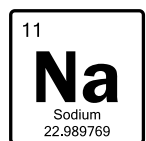
## WHAT IS SODIUM?

Sodium is a natural mineral that our bodies need to obtain through our food choices, because we cannot make it in our bodies. Sodium is used for a variety of bodily functions like - fluid balance, muscle contractions & relaxation, and nerve functions. However, eating too much sodium may increase your (or your child's) risk of heart related chronic diseases.

**Salt** is a compound made of the minerals, Sodium and Chloride. All salt has sodium, however, even though they are used interchangeably...

### SODIUM DOES NOT = SALT

Sodium can be found in a variety of foods that are not typically salty tasting due to its functions in food production. Most sodium we consume comes from prepackaged items, not directly from salt shakers!



### Functions in Foods:

- Enhances and balances flavor
- Preserves freshness
- Improves texture and appearance

## SODIUM IN SCHOOL MEALS

School districts that participate in the USDA National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program are required to comply with age-appropriate average daily or weekly sodium targets. At Monona Grove, we offer balanced, nutritious meals that contain whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and protein, while considering student preferences, and selecting lower sodium options when available.

## FOODS MOST KIDS LIKE THAT TYPICALLY HAVE MORE SODIUM

- Pizza
- Breads, rolls, and tortillas
- Hamburgers, hot dogs, sub sandwiches
- Deli/cured meats
- Snack foods (chips, crackers)
- Burritos and tacos
- Cheese
- Condiments
- Chicken (nuggets, tenders, patties)
- Soups

## MINDFULNESS WITH SODIUM

Practice being mindful by eating foods higher in sodium you most enjoy, and choose “low sodium” or “no salt added” labeled items for other foods, when able. Start by cooking one more meal each week at home.

Learn more about sodium by visiting: The [American Heart Association](#) and the USDA [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)