

# Just The Facts!

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

### KEY ISSUES:

- Too much salt and sodium are linked to high blood pressure. Reducing dietary sodium can lower blood pressure, which reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.
- Most of us eat too much salt (sodium), and this includes most children.
- Cutting back on sodium in school meals can help children learn to enjoy foods for their natural tastes. Kicking the salt habit may provide health benefits for a lifetime.
- For school meals, schools are required to meet the following sodium targets by July 1, 2014:

Grade	Lunch	Breakfast
K-5	<1,230mg	<540mg
6-8	<1,360mg	<600mg
9-12	<1,420mg	<640mg

**N**early all Americans consume more sodium than they need. Often we don't know how much sodium we are getting. Taste alone may not tell us which foods are high in sodium. Table salt (sodium chloride) isn't the only source of sodium. Look at ingredient lists for other sources, such as monosodium glutamate (MSG), baking soda, baking powder, disodium phosphate, sodium alginate, and sodium nitrate or nitrite. Most sodium comes from processed and ready-to-eat foods, which usually come in cans, jars, packages, and boxes.

When students regularly taste salty foods, they learn to prefer these salty flavors. By reducing the salt and sodium in school meals, students' tastes can change. Offer lower sodium versions of popular menu items and recipes at the beginning of a school year. Adding less or no salt and choosing foods lower in salt can help students learn to like foods with a less salty taste. Students may not even notice the difference.

Easy ways to follow the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

### Recipe for Success

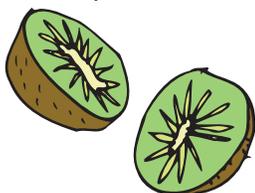
- **Read Nutrition Facts labels** to compare the sodium content for similar foods. Foods that are low in sodium contain less than 140 mg or 5% Daily Value (DV). Choose products with the lowest amount of sodium per serving.
- **Serve more fresh foods** and fewer processed foods. Most fresh fruits and vegetables are naturally low in sodium. Lesser 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.

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 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 10g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 20%	Iron 4%

## USDA Foods Program

USDA offers only low-sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables through the USDA Foods Program. Schools can also order frozen vegetables as an additional no-salt-added option. Canned dry beans and peas are available only in low-sodium (140 mg per ½-cup serving) varieties. Cheeses available through USDA Foods are lower in sodium and fat. To check the list of available low-sodium USDA Foods, go to the USDA Foods Toolkit at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/healthy/Professional.htm> to review the Foods Available List for Schools.

- **Offer high-sodium foods less often.** Go easy on pre-prepared, processed entrées and side dishes, such as pizza and chicken nuggets. Use grilled chicken breast instead of luncheon meat, bacon, sausage, hotdogs, or ham.
- **Look for manufacturers** that offer low-sodium or “no-salt-added” products. Choose lower sodium or no-salt-added versions when purchasing popular processed foods.
- **Drain and rinse** canned, precooked beans or vegetables to remove even more sodium.
- **Modify recipes that use high-sodium ingredients** such as cheese sauces, canned soups, tomato sauce, paste, or spaghetti sauce, canned vegetables, chips, and taco shells. Use lower sodium versions or use less. Remove salt from recipes whenever possible. (Note: Do not leave out the salt when preparing baked goods because it could affect the baking process.)
- **Use fresh or dried herbs,** spices, lemon or orange zest, or fruit juices to jazz up the flavors in foods without adding sodium!
- **Look for foods that are good sources of potassium,** which counteracts some of sodium’s effects on blood pressure. 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 are examples of foods to choose for potassium.



## Did You Know?

- **Most sodium (about 75 percent) in our diet comes from eating processed and prepared foods,** such as canned vegetables, soups, luncheon meats, and frozen entrees. Food manufacturers use salt or other sodium-containing compounds to preserve food as well as to modify the taste and texture.
- **Some condiments such as soy sauce and ketchup can be high in sodium.** Adding them - either while cooking or at the table - can raise the sodium content of the meal!
- **Sodium that naturally occurs** in meat, poultry, dairy products, and vegetables, accounts for only about 10 percent of our salt intake.

## Messages for Students

- **Be “salt savvy”-** read the Nutrition Facts label and choose foods with less sodium.
- **Try fruit or veggies with low-fat dip** instead of salty snack foods.

## For More Information:

**Team Nutrition** (<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov>)  
**USDA Choose MyPlate** ([www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov))  
**Salt and Sodium** (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet14SaltAndSodium.pdf>)  
**Reducing Sodium Intake** (<http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20120102035310.pdf>)

