

NUTRITION NEWS

For Parents and Teachers of Elementary School Children

Skip the Salt

Table salt is made up of sodium and chloride, 2 chemicals that are essential for health but only in very small amounts. Sodium and chloride occur naturally in many foods and it's not necessary to add them to prepared foods.

A balanced diet based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans contains more than enough sodium to meet our daily requirement.

- Americans on average eat about 1 to 3 teaspoons of salt a day (adding up to between 2,300 and 6,900 mg of sodium).
- The average daily sodium requirement is much less, ranging from 1,200 mg of sodium for 4 to 8-year-old children to 1,500 mg for 9 to 18-year-olds. This amounts to about half a teaspoon of salt a day.

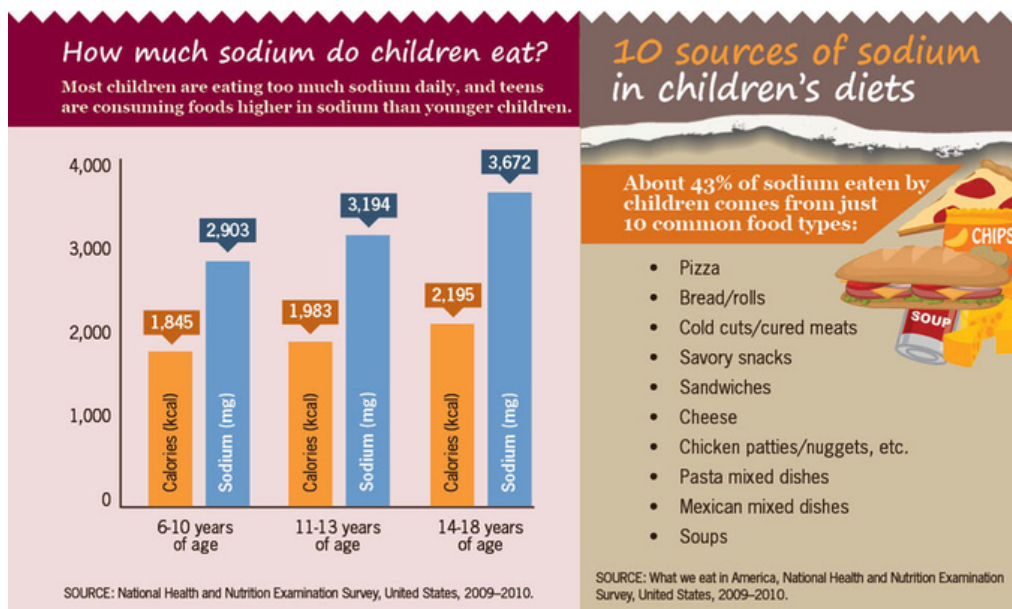
We add salt to food from force of habit or because we've learned to like a salty taste. Adding moderate amounts of salt to food for taste is acceptable, but excessive amounts of salt should be discouraged as the child's taste preferences are formed early and large quantities of sodium may lead to high blood pressure later in life. So it's a good idea to train children to avoid unnecessary salt. One way is to keep the saltshaker off the dinner table. Taste food before you add salt. At the same time, keep in mind that most of the sodium in our diets does not come from salt added at the table or while cooking.



Where does salt come from?

Almost 80% of the sodium in our diets comes from processed foods like bread, soups, salty snacks, fast foods, canned foods, or processed meats.

- **Every meal and snack-** Children eat about 15% of sodium at breakfast, 30% at lunch, 39% at dinner, and 16% at snacks.
- **Common foods-** About 43% of sodium eaten by children comes from just 10 common food types:
 - pizza, bread, and rolls
 - cold cuts and cured meats
 - sandwiches like cheeseburgers
 - snacks, such as chips and crackers
 - cheese
 - chicken patties, nuggets, and tenders
 - pasta mixed dishes, such as spaghetti with sauce
 - Mexican mixed dishes, such as burritos and tacos
 - soups
- **Processed foods and restaurant foods-** Most sodium is already in food before you buy it or order it. About 65% comes from store foods, 13% from fast food and pizza restaurant foods, and 9% from school cafeteria foods.








What can you do?

- When cooking at home, try different spices, herbs, and vegetables instead of salt.
- Use 'low sodium' or 'no salt added' ingredients in your meals and recipes.
- Model healthy eating for your children by having a diet rich in fruits and vegetables without added sodium.
- Compare Nutrition Facts labels to choose the lowest sodium options before you buy.
- Ask your grocery manager to provide more low sodium options for your family's favorite foods.
- Request restaurant nutrition information to make healthier, lower-sodium choices.
- Use social media outlets to share your challenges and successes in reducing sodium .

Great SALternatives

Small changes make a big impact on your child's daily sodium intake.

| A Typical Day | Sodium (mg)* | | Make the Change | You could save Sodium (mg)* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Breakfast at home: Whole-wheat toast (1 slice), Egg (scrambled and salted), Orange juice (4oz) | 280 |  | Compare bread products when shopping to find lower sodium options. Try seasoning with pepper, parsley or thyme on eggs in place of salt. | 85 |
| Morning snack: Whole-grain graham crackers (8 squares), Skim milk (4oz) | 250 |  | Cut the amount of graham crackers in half. Load up on fruit, naturally low-sodium. Pack a banana as a snack! | 150 |
| Lunch at school: School Lunch pepperoni pizza (1 slice), Sliced cucumbers (4oz), Gelatin cup | 850 |  | Try the new pepperoni pizza that meets the sodium targets for National School Lunch Program. | 160 |
| Snack: Crackers (about 16), Baby carrots (about 8), Hummus (2 Tbsp) | 450 |  | Look for reduced sodium crackers at the grocery store. Compare brands of products, such as hummus, and pick the lowest in sodium. | 250 |
| Dinner on the go: Fast food deli sandwich with meat, cheese and veggies, Side of potato chips, Sports drink (12oz) | 1585 |  | Ask to see the nutrition facts before ordering. Skip the deli cheese and use less condiments. Swap chips for lower-sodium chips. Choose water. | 490 |
| Total Sodium: | 3,415 | | Total Saved: | 1,135 |

*Values were rounded to the nearest 5mg
 SOURCES: Packaged and restaurant food data collected from manufacturers' and retailers' websites, June 2014
 Nutritional values for whole food products are available by the United States Department of Agriculture's National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference
 Nutritional values: <http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/>

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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**CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE
Placer/Nevada Counties**

11477 E Avenue
DeWitt Center
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 889-7350

Website:

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/letseathealthy/>



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Agriculture and Natural Resources