

HEART-HEALTHY MEALS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Reducing sodium to promote healthy hearts while providing flavorful meals and snacks.



WHY WORRY ABOUT SODIUM INTAKE WITH TODDLERS?

**Cornell Cooperative Extension
Niagara County**

Sodium Reduction in Communities Program

The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend limiting sodium to 1,200mg/day for ages 1 through 3 and 1,500 mg/day for ages 4 through 8. High sodium diets can increase the risk of high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and stroke, even in children. The majority of sodium in the American diet comes from processed, prepackaged and prepared foods.

Toddlers' palates are still developing, so we want them to become accustomed to lower-sodium foods now. Exposing children to a variety of foods and flavors allows for their palates and taste preferences to expand as they grow older. Children in childcare centers receive approximately one-half to two-thirds of their daily nutrient requirements while in the center. Childcare centers have the opportunity to provide nutrient-dense foods and can make a large impact in reducing sodium intake in toddlers.

HEART-HEALTHY MEALS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Cornell Cooperative Extension
Niagara County

For more information:

<http://cceniagaracounty.org/food-nutrition-health/sodium-reduction-in-communities-program>

<https://www.cdc.gov/salt/index.htm>

Email: sodium@health.ny.gov

HEART-HEALTHY MEALS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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SODIUM ON THE LABEL

Food package claims and labels are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Reading the Nutrition Facts Label and identifying nutrient claims can be confusing. Here are some commonly used terms to know when looking at sodium content and comparing food labels.

Nutrition Facts Label:

- Serving Size is listed at the top of the label. Take into consideration the serving size compared to amount portioned.
- Percent Daily Value can be helpful to identify high-sodium products.
 - 5% Daily Value or less per serving is considered **low in sodium**
 - 20% Daily Value or more per serving is considered **high in sodium**

Front-of-the-Package Label

- "Low sodium" <5% Daily Value or <140 mg sodium per serving.
- "Reduced Sodium" at least 25% less sodium than the original product.
- "Lite in Sodium" or "Light in Sodium" at least 50% less sodium than the original product.
- "Lower sodium" has less sodium than the original product but could still be high in sodium. A specific percentage has not been defined by FDA.

Sodium as an Ingredient:

- Salt and sodium are often used interchangeably. However, they are not the same. Sodium is a mineral and salt is a compound made up of sodium and chloride.
- Sodium is used during baking, to enhance flavor and preserve the food.
- Examples of sodium as an ingredient includes monosodium glutamate, sodium bicarbonate, sodium nitrite and sodium benzoate.

Nutrition Facts	
6 servings per container	
Serving size	1 serving (230g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	330
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 10g	13%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 20mg	7%
Sodium 700mg	30%
Total Carbohydrate 44g	16%
Dietary Fiber 2g	7%
Total Sugars 5g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 15g	
Vitamin D 1mcg	6%
Calcium 267mg	20%
Iron 2mg	10%
Potassium 169mg	4%

*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration among the nutrition manager, food service director and staff, teachers and parents are necessary to increase healthier menu options. Having all key partners on board will ensure the success of your sodium reduction work.

Managers and Staff: The personnel who purchase and prepare the food would be the most helpful in conducting an assessment and implementing sodium reduction strategies.

Teachers: Extend sodium education into the classroom by creating a space to learn about food and nutrition, especially during mealtimes.

Parents and Caretakers: Communicating nutrition tips to families can help form healthy habits at home.

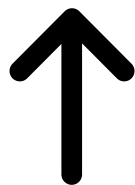


MENU AND PRODUCT REVIEW

The "Sodium Comparison Worksheet" can be used to assess sodium levels currently being served in your facility. Organize the spreadsheet into food categories or mealtimes and include each ingredient and ready-to-serve items. Use the Nutrition Facts Label and fill in the worksheet. It is helpful to include the product number, name, and manufacturer. Below is an example of a product entry.

The Sodium Comparison Worksheet is available in the resource section on page 16.

Original Product				A	
Distributor	Product Number	Product Name	Serving Size	Sodium per Serving (mg)	
Meat, Entrée's					
US Foods	2349355	Turkey, Breast sliced, 0.7oz	2 oz	650	



Add the distributor, product number and name. Product name should be specific and match the product name from the distributor.



Look on the Nutrition Facts Label to document the serving size and amount of sodium per serving.

TIP: Use the Sodium Comparison Worksheet to keep a continuous list of sodium content for ingredients and items. Update as necessary.

INGREDIENTS TO FOCUS ON FIRST

Some ingredients and products will contribute more sodium than others. High sodium products and ingredients are grouped and listed below. Choosing 1-2 ingredients or groups to focus on is a great place to start lowering sodium.

Deli Meats:

Deli meats can be very high in sodium. The phrase "lower sodium" compares products of the same brand. It can be helpful to find products that are labeled lower sodium but always check the Nutrition Facts Label.

Precooked and processed proteins (chicken, pizza, breaded fish):

Sodium content in chicken products vary greatly. Some chicken items contain saline solution as a preservative, increasing sodium content. Read the Nutrition Facts Label to find the best options for your center.

Canned vegetables:

Low-sodium canned goods are available through major distributors. However, using fresh and frozen items are lower in sodium and adds flavor and nutrients to meals.

Tomato products:

Many national brands have No-Salt-Added (NSA) products. Compare labels when purchasing these items or ask your distributor for low-sodium options.

Condiments:

Instead of purchasing ketchup, syrup, jelly, and ranch dressing in bulk, choose single serving pouches or containers. Opting for these products helps control portions provided to children.

Spice blends:

Adding spices while cooking adds flavor. Store-bought taco seasoning and Italian blends often have added salt as an ingredient, so be sure to read the Nutrition Facts Label for no-added-sodium spice blends or mix your own - but skip the salt!

Soups:

Canned soups are high in sodium. Try fresh and frozen soups in addition to canned. Limit offering processed soups to once per month or menu cycle and pair with lower-sodium side dishes.

DAILY SODIUM LOG

Monitoring sodium levels per meal and per day is helpful to identify which foods or meals could be modified to lower daily sodium intake.

The Daily Sodium Log should be completed for each menu cycle to ensure the nutrition policy and sodium guidelines are being followed. The completed document will show how sodium adds up throughout the day and high-sodium products to replace.

The Daily Sodium Log worksheet is available in the resource section on page 17.

MONDAY			
		Size	Sodium
B	Biscuit	1 oz	660
	Pears	1/4c	0
	Milk	3/4 c	
	Total		660
L	Turkey ham	3 oz	750
	WG Roll	1 oz	210
	Can Green Bean	1/4c	175
	Tropical Fruit	1/4c	0
	Milk	3/4c	
	Gravy	2 tbsp	115
	Total		1250
S	Carrots	1/2c	0
	Ranch	2 tbsp	260
	WG Crackers	0.5 oz	105
	Total		365
Day total			2275

Here is one example of breakfast, lunch and snack. Since milk is a requirement for breakfast and lunch, sodium content is not included.



Three potential items to consider replacing include:
 Biscuit
 Turkey ham
 Canned Green Beans



TIP: Keep a list of lower-sodium items from each food supplier. Track the serving size and sodium for the ingredients.

PRODUCT REPLACEMENT

Product replacement is one strategy that can drastically reduce sodium levels in a menu. Ask your food distributor to provide lower-sodium options and samples for taste testing.

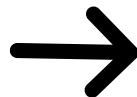
To easily identify lower-sodium options, compare original products to new products using the "Sodium Comparison Worksheet". The serving size for both products should be the same for accurate comparison. Below is an example that lists three lower-sodium deli turkey products.

New products that can replace the current sliced turkey are listed.



Current/Original Product				A	New Product				B	(A-B)
Distributor	Product Number	Product Name	Serving Size	Sodium per Serving (mg)	Distributor	Product Number	Product Name	Serving Size	Sodium per Serving (mg)	Change in Sodium per Serving (mg)
US Foods	2349355	Turkey, Breast, sliced, 0.7 oz	2 oz	650	US Foods	1278860	Turkey, Sliced, 0.7 oz	2 oz	460	190
					US Foods	7176514	Turkey, Sliced, 0.5 oz	2 oz	500	150
					US Foods	2565976	Turkey Breast Whole	2 oz	300	350

Use the last column to compare the items and display the change in sodium compared to the current item.



	B	(A-B)
Serving Size	Sodium per Serving (mg)	Change in Sodium per Serving (mg)
2 oz	460	190
2 oz	500	150
2 oz	300	350

TIP: Replacing a few high-sodium ingredients can make a big difference throughout the day.

MONITORING PRODUCT CHANGES

After selecting lower-sodium foods, document the changes in the "Sodium Comparison Worksheet" to reflect which foods will be used and which were ruled out. Monitoring product replacements can help you keep track of sodium reduction and which products have already been replaced. Change in sodium per serving can be reported as a percentage or in milligrams of sodium reduced.

Current/Original Product				A	New Product				B	(A-B)
Distributor	Product Number	Product Name	Serving Size	Sodium per Serving (mg)	Distributor	Product Number	Product Name	Serving Size	Sodium per Serving (mg)	Change in Sodium per Serving (mg)
US Foods	2349355	Turkey, Breast, sliced, 0.7 oz	2-oz	650	US Foods	1278860	Turkey, Sliced, 0.7 oz	2 oz	460	190



The new product is noted and the change in sodium per serving is listed.

FIND A PRODUCT THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU

Questions to ask when replacing a higher-sodium product with a lower-sodium product:

- How will storage space be affected?
- Is the new product financially feasible?
- Is the taste of the item acceptable?
- Is the product suitable for the children?
- Does the item require more prep time for staff?

NUTRITION POLICY

Implementing a policy with recommended sodium limits and best practices for menu planning and meal preparation can increase sustainability of sodium reduction efforts and ensures changes will be upheld year after year.

Example policy wording includes:

- Sodium is limited to:
 - Breakfast: less than 430 mg per meal
 - Lunch: less than 640 mg per meal
 - Side dish: less than 200 mg per serving
 - Snack: less than 200 mg per serving
- No additional table salt should be added to meals during preparation.
- Prepare meals and snacks from scratch using lower-sodium ingredients when possible.
- Flavor meals with fresh or dried spices/herbs, or salt-free seasoning blends.
- Serve sauces and condiments in single-serving packages, if possible.
- Limit processed and pre-packaged foods (such chicken nuggets, hot dogs, fish sticks, pizza, etc.)
- Follow Child and Adult Care Food Program best practices
- Monitor and evaluate the calories, sugar, fat and sodium on a yearly basis. Sodium can be monitored using the Sodium Comparison Worksheet and Daily Sodium Log on pages 16 and 17.
- Celebrate special occasions, birthdays and holidays with non-food activities. Fun-filled activities that include learning and physical activity could include a scavenger hunt, arts and crafts project, or special game.



TIP: Adopting a nutrition policy with sodium standards provides guidelines to cook and serve healthy meals and snacks.

ACTIVITIES & EDUCATION

Staff Training

Create buy-in and trust with your staff by providing hands-on trainings about heart health, maintaining flavor without adding salt, and new recipe ideas.

- Find a local teaching kitchen to bring your staff for a training.
- Contact a local public health non-profit to provide education about heart health.
- Reach out to a culinary school or local chef to host a training for staff. Provide topic ideas and even try a new recipe!
- Provide various trainings on label reading, finding hidden sodium, or new nutrition policies.



Classroom Education

- Discuss the 5 taste profiles
 - Sweet, Sour, Bitter, Salty, Umami
- Read books about healthy eating and where food comes from.
- Host a cooking demo and have the students help with mixing and pouring of ingredients.
- Organize a taste testing.

Parent Engagement

- Provide recipe cards with no-salt-added spice blends
 - Popular recipes include taco and ranch mixes!
- Host a gardening class for parents to learn how to plant and grow different herbs.
- Provide handouts on using herbs and seasonings during cooking.
- Send out monthly nutrition newsletters on various topics such as reading the Nutrition Facts Label and how to identify lower-sodium items at the store.

TIP: Adults can benefit from lowering the sodium in their diet, too. Provide resources to display and arrange educational events.

ACTIVITIES & EDUCATION

Taste Testing

Involving children in the decision-making process often increases their willingness to try new menu items. Hold an event for students to taste test and compare each item. Have the children vote on the item they like better and consider adding it to the menu.



Menu Planning Tips

- Pair higher sodium entrees with low- or no-sodium side dishes
 - Examples of lower-sodium sides include pasta, and fresh or frozen vegetables
- Be selective when incorporating sauces and condiments
 - Choose lower-sodium gravies and culinary bases
- Balance sodium throughout the day
 - If one meal is high-in-sodium, try to find lower-sodium alternatives for the other meals and snacks
- Avoid highly processed cheeses, such as American Cheese
 - Explore and compare different types of cheese such as muenster, Swiss, or provolone
- Monitor portion size that is being offered
 - Use appropriate serving utensils for portioning and during family-style meals



TIP: It can take more than 10 times of trying a new food before our taste buds learn to enjoy it. Taste testing can play an important role in trying new foods.

Visit Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County's Sodium Reduction in Communities Program web page to view three associated culinary training videos and accompanying worksheets.

<http://cceniagaracounty.org/food-nutrition-health/sodium-reduction-in-communities-program>

RESOURCES

Additional websites providing guidance on sodium reduction strategies:

- Center of Disease Control and Prevention Tip sheets, videos, toolkits;
https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/programs/srcp_resources.htm
- Center of Disease Control and Prevention Reducing Sodium in Children's Diets
<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/children-sodium/index.html#whatcanbedone>
- Health Resources in Action: Sodium Reduction: Assessment to Action Digital Tools <https://hria.org/resources/sodium-reduction-assessment-to-action-digital-tools/>
- Marion County Public Health Department: Head Start Toolkit
<http://marionhealth.org/programs/population-health/chronic-disease/sodium-reduction-in-communities-program/>
- National Network of Public Health Sodium Reduction Initiative
<https://nnphi.org/relatedarticle/sodium-reduction/>

**The following pages are the
worksheets mentioned in this
guide**

Sodium Comparison Worksheet

Daily Sodium Log Sheet

Daily Sodium Log Worksheet

Month: _____

	MONDAY			TUESDAY			WEDNESDAY			THURSDAY			FRIDAY		
	Serving Size	Sodium		Serving Size	Sodium		Serving Size	Sodium		Serving Size	Sodium		Serving Size	Sodium	
B															
	Milk			Milk			Milk			Milk			Milk		
	Total			Total			Total			Total			Total		
L															
	Milk			Milk			Milk			Milk			Milk		
	Total			Total			Total			Total			Total		
S															
	Total			Total			Total			Total			Total		
Daily Total			Daily Total			Daily Total			Daily Total			Daily Total			