

# Build a Healthy Plate With Less Salt and Sodium



## Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children: Provider Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

When children regularly taste salty foods, they learn to prefer these salty flavors more and more. Serving foods lower in sodium can help children learn to like and enjoy foods with a less salty taste. You can help by providing foods with less sodium to the children in your care. It is important to remember that:



- **Most sodium comes from processed and ready-to-eat foods, which usually come in cans, jars, packages, and boxes.**
- **Eating foods containing too much sodium may raise blood pressure.**
- **In contrast, foods high in potassium may help lower blood pressure.**
- **Offering children the least processed foods available is an important way to help them reduce sodium intake and stay healthy. Examples include: fresh or frozen spinach instead of canned spinach, and fresh chicken instead of chicken nuggets.**

Nearly everyone benefits from eating foods with less sodium. On average, blood pressure goes up with sodium intake. African-American children of all ages, as well as children with a family history of high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease, are most affected by sodium and potassium intake. Use these tips to lower sodium in foods you serve.

### What low-sodium foods should I offer?

When buying foods, choose no salt added, low-sodium, or reduced-sodium versions, and prepare foods without adding salt. Choose foods such as:

- ▶ **Raw or cooked, fresh or frozen vegetables** that are prepared without added sodium or salt.
- ▶ **Canned or packaged foods** labeled as “reduced sodium,” “low sodium,” or “no salt added.”
- ▶ **Fresh beef, pork, poultry, and seafood**, rather than those with salt added.
- ▶ **Nuts and seeds that are unsalted** (including almonds, mixed nuts, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, or sunflower seed butter).
- ▶ **Other fresh foods and fewer processed foods.**



### How can I serve a variety of foods that are lower in sodium?

- ▶ **Pay attention to condiments.**
- ▶ **Use herbs or no-salt spice mixes** instead of salt, soy sauce, catsup, barbeque sauce, pickles, olives, salad dressings, butter, stick margarine, gravy, or cream sauce to season vegetables and other dishes.
- ▶ **Choose low-sodium soy sauce and catsup.**
- ▶ **Use only a sprinkling of flavoring packets** instead of the entire packet.
- ▶ **Remove salt from recipes whenever possible.** Fresh or dried herbs, spices, lemon or orange zest, or 100% fruit juices jazz up the flavors in foods without adding salt.
- ▶ **Drain and rinse canned, precooked beans or vegetables** to remove even more sodium.



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%
<b>Sodium 140 mg</b>	<b>5%</b>
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 6g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 20%	Iron 4%

## Be Mindful of the Foods You Choose for CACFP

- ▶ **Check the Nutrition Facts labels and ingredient lists to find packaged and canned foods lower in sodium.** Foods that are low in sodium have less than 140 mg or 5% Daily Value (DV). Choose the foods with lower numbers, and with “salt” listed further down the ingredient list.
- ▶ **Think fresh.** Fresh foods are generally lower in sodium, compared to processed foods.

- ▶ **Limit highly processed, breaded meat, poultry, or fish to only one time per week.** These include processed foods like frozen pizza, chicken nuggets, hot dogs, sausage, bacon, processed cheese sauces, and lunch meats.
- ▶ **Choose less-processed foods.** They 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.



- **Hot dogs, sausages, nuts, seeds, nut and seed butters, and small pieces of raw vegetables may pose choking hazards.**
- **See Supplement A on page 77 for more information on choking hazards.**

## How can I encourage kids to eat foods low in sodium?

Sometimes it takes a little time for kids to get used to different or new flavors. Let those taste buds change! Cut back on salt little by little, and children’s taste for salt will change over time. Here are some ways to help kids eat less sodium:

- ▶ **Conduct an herb and spice taste-test!** Prepare children’s favorite vegetables, beans, brown rice, or whole-grain breads or noodles with fresh or dried herbs, no-salt spice mixes, or lemon or orange zest. Have children taste and vote for their favorite no-salt additions.
- ▶ **Cook together.** Children learn about foods when they help prepare them. Point out when you modify recipes by using no-salt-added or lower sodium versions of ingredients. Children can help drain and rinse canned beans to remove some sodium, or help sprinkle dried herbs into a pasta salad instead of salt.

## Support the Message

- ▶ **Send the message home.** Share the *Nibbles for Health* take-home newsletter for parents on Nutrition Facts labels. This resource can help parents choose foods with the lowest amount of sodium per serving. [http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles\\_Newsletter\\_3.pdf](http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles_Newsletter_3.pdf)
- ▶ **Enjoy a variety of foods with less sodium.** See *Choose MyPlate* for more ideas. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/daily-food-plans/about-salt.html>



## Activities

### How can I put this information into practice?

- ▶ **Serve foods with little or no sodium.**
- ▶ **Use the Nutrition Facts label to compare sodium in foods.** Find the percent (%) Daily Value for sodium, and choose the foods with lower numbers.

**The Nutrition Facts label** provides the percent (%) Daily Value for the nutrients listed (except *trans* fat, sugars, and protein).

**The % Daily Value** is a number that tells you if there is a lot or a little of a nutrient in a serving of the food. This number can also help you see how a serving of food fits into a total daily diet.



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% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
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<b>Sodium 140 mg</b>	<b>5%</b>
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Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 6g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 4%	• Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 20%	• Iron 4%

**A % Daily Value** of 5% or less is low; 20% or more is high. Choose foods that are low in sodium.

### Look at the Nutrition Facts label above to answer these questions.

- ▶ **What is the serving size for this food?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ **What is the % Daily Value of sodium in this food?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ **Does this food contribute a high or low amount of sodium?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ **How do you know if this food contributes a high or low amount of sodium?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

more 'activities' on next page ...



... more 'activities'



**Take a look at your current weekly or cycle menu. Compare the Nutrition Facts labels for the menu items that include sodium. Which options are more healthy and less healthy? Whenever possible, choose foods that contain 5% or less sodium.**

- ▶ **Circle the high-sodium items on the menu.**
- ▶ **Find low-sodium options to replace those items that are high in sodium for the next month's menu. What are some foods that can be served instead of the circled menu items?**

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- ▶ **Write down two to three ways to lower sodium in the menu next month.** Think about food choices that are lower in sodium, what to look for when food shopping, or different ways to cook or prepare foods with less salt. (Refer to the tips on this tip sheet for easy ways to lower sodium.)

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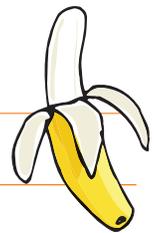
- ▶ **What fresh foods can you use in place of canned or processed foods to reduce sodium in your menu?**

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- ▶ **Potassium can help children maintain a healthy blood pressure. Think about ways to include at least one potassium-rich food on the menu every day next month.** Ideas include sweet potatoes, spinach, beet greens, tomato products (paste, sauce, and juice), beans (white, lima, kidney), lentils, bananas, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, raisins, and kiwifruit.

**Write down some potassium-rich foods you will offer next month:**



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