

Dear Family,

It's time to give salt the shake! Too much sodium can cause extra fluid to build up in the bloodstream, adding a burden to the heart as it works to pump blood through the body. Being aware of the sodium in foods may **help your child lower or avoid high blood pressure**. The American Heart Association recommends that **we consume less than 1,500 milligrams of sodium a day—just over a half teaspoon of salt**. Since about 75 percent of the sodium we eat comes from processed foods and is already added to our food before we buy it, it can be difficult to control sodium intake. Teach your child how to read labels to be aware of the many hidden sources of sodium. Pay particular attention to the “Salty Six” foods that contribute the most sodium to Americans’ diets—soup, breads and rolls, cold cuts and cured meats, pizza, poultry, and sandwiches. Other foods, such as cheese and snacks, can also be high in salt.

Keep in mind that different brands and restaurant versions of the same foods may have different sodium levels. Some foods come in versions with less sodium, too. Compare labels and choose the product with the lowest amount of sodium you can find.



Sincerely,

teacher



American
Heart
Association®

Your child is a participant in the American Heart Association's Kids Heart Challenge. The AHA has five priority messages for your family:

Physical Activity

Healthy Eating

 Sodium

Sodas and Other
Sugary Drinks

Tobacco/Smoking

On the lookout for salt sneaking into your child's diet?

Try these suggestions:

- Yikes! A small order of french fries at a fast food restaurant contains anywhere from 134 milligrams to 257 milligrams of sodium! **If your child loves fries, ask for the order with no salt added and then split it** between the two of you or with a sibling. You'll cut down on the sodium plus save both cash and calories!
- Teach your child to **read nutrition labels and know what the words on food packages mean**. For example, “sodium free” means there is less than five milligrams of sodium in a serving; “reduced” or “less sodium” means there is at least 25 percent less sodium than the regular version of the product.

Good to Know!

The average American takes in more than **3,400 milligrams of sodium** each day—more than double what the American Heart Association recommends. The body needs a little sodium each day to function properly, but the amount we eat is far too high and can increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and other health problems. To learn more, visit the American Heart Association website at heart.org/sodium.