**Sodium Shocker: Children’s Consumption Exceeds Recommendations**

by *Melissa Halas-Liang*

Adapted from <http://www.superkidsnutrition.com/nutrition-articles/sodium-shocker-childrens-consumption-exceeds-recommendations/>

Watch out, little hearts! You might be pumping too hard from salt over-load. That’s what a new study from the **Centers for Disease Control** (CDC) shows. In fact, 9 out of 10 American kids between ages 6-18 eat way too much sodium (salt). They get about 3,300 mg of sodium ***before***it’s added at the table. The problem? Don’t blame the salt-shaker. It’s because we eat too many restaurant and processed foods

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines say children over age 2 need less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day. That’s about 1 teaspoon of salt. Instead, kids get **43%** more sodium than they need. More is not better! More is unhealthy! Eek!

Why should this worry us? It’s because sodium raises our blood pressure. High blood pressure increases the chance you’ll get heart disease or strokes. Your blood vessels have to last a lifetime. One kid in six has high blood pressure. If blood pressure isn’t controlled through diet and exercise now, it places them at greater risk for heart disease as adults.

Our bodies need sodium for fluid balance, heart function, and nerve signaling. But too much salt has bad consequences. If you eat high-sodium foods as a child, you develop a taste for salt. By eating too many salty foods, you miss out on the real taste of food. You may carry this habit into adulthood. If you choose foods with lower salt levels, you can control the problem. Read food labels and compare sodium levels across brands. Then you can make a smarter choice.

Some kids are more likely to be affected more than other kids, especially African Americans. This is why your doctor checks your blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure or are sensitive to sodium, limit your diet to 1,500 mg or ¾ tsp salt per day.

Also at risk are those with:

* Hypertension
* Diabetes
* Chronic kidney disease
* Excess weight or obesity.

Here are the [**CDC’s findings**](http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2014/p0909-children-sodium.html) on the top ten culprits responsible for 43% of children’s sodium intake:

1. Pizza
2. Bread/rolls (surprising, right?)
3. Cold cuts/cured meats
4. Salty snacks
5. Sandwiches
6. Cheese
7. Chicken patties/nuggets, etc.
8. Mexican mixed dishes
9. Pasta mixed dishes
10. Soups

Keep track of your family’s sodium and salt intake for a week. You may be surprised at how much salt you are getting!

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