

Sodium Learning Activity



Many children and adults consume unhealthy levels of sodium on a regular basis (sodium is found in salt). Awareness of excessive sodium in some of the foods we eat is an important step in enabling students to make informed and healthier decisions around what they eat. While sodium is the nutrient of concern, the term 'salt' may be more relevant to your students.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



BIG IDEAS

- Adopting healthy personal practices and safety strategies protects ourselves and others.

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES:

- Explore and describe strategies for making healthy eating choices in a variety of settings.
- Explore and describe strategies for pursuing personal healthy-living goals.
- Identify and apply strategies that promote mental well-being.

CONTENT

- Practices that promote health and well-being, including those relating to physical activity, sleep, and illness prevention.
- Nutrition and hydration choices to support different activities and overall health.



FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL HEALTH CONNECTIONS



RELATIONSHIPS AND ENVIRONMENTS

- Have students work together to provide feedback on the concerns surrounding excessive salt intake.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Students understand that packaged and processed foods contain more sodium than minimally processed foods and fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruits.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Invite a representative from a local First Peoples group to discuss how their culture preserves food.

PREPARATION

- Review the *Sodium* section of the *Healthy Eating Overview* (included with this activity).
- Copy/print *Go for Low Worksheet* (see following pages) one per student.

IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS

- Pose the following question: What is the difference between fresh and processed or packaged foods?
- Guiding questions:
 - Q:** What are examples of foods that are high in salt?
 - A:** e.g., instant ramen noodle soup, pizza, hot dogs, French fries, soy sauce, oyster sauce, ketchup, deli meats, salty snacks like chips and pretzels, canned or dried soups, etc.
 - Q:** What are examples of foods that are low in salt?
 - A:** e.g., vegetables and fruit (fresh, frozen and dried – canned vegetables can be higher in salt, but are still a healthy choice), unsalted nuts, roasted or grilled meats, fish or poultry without added salt, stir-fry vegetables with spices, pizza with vegetable toppings, etc.

Q: What are some ways that people can lower the amount of salt they consume?

A: e.g., choose less packaged and processed foods, choose reduced, lower salt, or no salt products, use less ketchup, pickles, olives, soy sauce, relishes and other condiments, etc.

- Provide each student with a *Go for Low* worksheet. Have students put an X beside the high salt food in each row.

- **ANSWER KEY: GO FOR LOW**

ROW 1 *Deep Fried Fish & Chips*

Most deep fried foods are high in salt. Lower salt meats, fish and meat alternatives, including the others listed, are better choices.

ROW 2 *French Fries*

A high salt (and high fat) option. Any of the others are better choices.

ROW 3 *Deli Ham and Cheese on White Bagel*

Many deli meats and cheeses are high salt choices. Any of the others are better choices.

ROW 4 *Potato Chips*

Potato chips are a classic high salt snack. Any of the others are a better choice for a snack.

ROW 5 *Frozen Pizza*

Many packaged, processed foods, including frozen pizzas, are high salt choices. Any of the others are better choices.

ROW 6 *Vegetable Juice*

Vegetable juice is often high in salt, but lower salt choices are available. Reduced or lower sodium products must have at least 25% less salt than the regular product, but they may still contain too much salt. Instead, choose whole pieces of vegetables or fruit instead of juice, and drink water or milk to satisfy thirst.

ROW 7 *Hot Dog and Ketchup*

Hot dogs and ketchup are high in salt. Roasted or grilled meats, fish, and foods prepared with spices and herbs are examples of lower salt choices.

ROW 8 *Fast Food Burger*

Choices in fast food restaurants are often high in salt and are one of the main sources of sodium in the Canadian diet. Ask for grilled burgers without the sauces in order to reduce the amount of salt.

ROW 9 *Instant Ramen Noodle Soup*

Packaged and canned soups are often high in salt. Lower or reduced sodium products are available but they may still be high in salt. Look for food choices that do not have sodium listed in the ingredient list. Homemade soups, chilis and stews are better choices, so long as they are made with little or no added salt.

ROW 10 *Processed Cheese Slices*

Processed cheese has more salt than other types of cheeses, and many other protein options. The other options are better choices.

- Ask students to take their worksheet home to share the lessons they have learned with someone else.

EXTENSION OF LEARNING

- Have students explore places where they eat healthy in the community (e.g., at home, at their after-school care, the recreation centre, their place of worship, their friend's houses, etc.). Invite students to draw a picture, create a collage, or take a picture of them eating their favourite healthy foods in their community. Showcase their findings.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



- Healthy Families BC
 - Sodium Resources (www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium)
 - Sodium Sense tool (www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/sodium-sense)
- HealthLink BC (www.healthlinkbc.ca)
 - Call 811 and speak with a registered dietitian)
- Dietitians of Canada
 - Sodium Sense Fact Sheets (<http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-A-Z/Blood-Pressure/Sodium-Sense-factsheets.aspx>)
- Sodium 101 (www.sodium101.ca)

GO FOR LOW WORKSHEET

Most of the salt we eat comes from processed foods such as cheese slices, deli meats, pizza, sauces and soups. Pre-packaged foods, ready-to-eat foods, fast foods, and restaurant meals are often high in salt. When making food, try to use less salt, soy sauce and other condiments as well as pre-packaged foods, which can be high in salt. Instead, try using lemon, garlic, onion, herbs and spices to add extra flavour.



INSTRUCTIONS

- STEP 1** Mark the **high salt** choice in each row. (X)
- STEP 2** What changes could you make in your food choices? _____
- STEP 3** Take this sheet home and share what you have learned about salt today with someone else.

ROW 1	Homemade Roast Beef <input type="radio"/>	Restaurant Deep Fried Fish and Chips <input type="radio"/>	Grilled Tofu <input type="radio"/>	Pita Bread and Hummus <input type="radio"/>	Grilled Fish <input type="radio"/>
ROW 2	Homemade Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges <input type="radio"/>	Restaurant Baked Potato <input type="radio"/>	French Fries <input type="radio"/>	Corn on the Cob <input type="radio"/>	Green Salad with Low Salt Dressing <input type="radio"/>
ROW 3	Deli Ham and Processed Cheese on White Bagel <input type="radio"/>	Garden Salad with Grilled Chicken with Low Salt Dressing <input type="radio"/>	Yogourt with Granola and Fruit <input type="radio"/>	Peanut Butter and Banana Sandwich <input type="radio"/>	Vegetable Omelette <input type="radio"/>
ROW 4	Low Salt Chips <input type="radio"/>	Dried Fruit and Cereal Mix <input type="radio"/>	Strawberries <input type="radio"/>	Unsalted Mixed Nuts <input type="radio"/>	Potato Chips <input type="radio"/>
ROW 5	Homemade Pasta with Vegetables and Chicken <input type="radio"/>	Homemade Chicken, Rice and Broccoli <input type="radio"/>	Homemade Spaghetti with Homemade Tomato Sauce <input type="radio"/>	Frozen Pizza <input type="radio"/>	Homemade Pork, Vegetable and Noodle Stir-Fry* <input type="radio"/>
ROW 6	Soy Milk <input type="radio"/>	100% Fruit Juice <input type="radio"/>	Milk <input type="radio"/>	Water <input type="radio"/>	Vegetable Juice <input type="radio"/>
ROW 7	Vermicelli Noodle Rice Wrap <input type="radio"/>	Pancakes with Fruit Sauce <input type="radio"/>	Hot Dog, Bun, and Ketchup <input type="radio"/>	Homemade Curried Vegetables and Rice <input type="radio"/>	Homemade Roasted Chicken Sandwich without Sauce <input type="radio"/>
ROW 8	Grilled Chicken Burger without Sauce <input type="radio"/>	Fast Food Burger <input type="radio"/>	Homemade Rice & Bean Burrito <input type="radio"/>	Shrimp with Noodles <input type="radio"/>	Scrambled Eggs, Toast & Sliced Tomato <input type="radio"/>
ROW 9	Grilled Kabobs with Rice <input type="radio"/>	Homemade Chili <input type="radio"/>	Instant Ramen Noodle Soup <input type="radio"/>	Homemade Vegetable Stew <input type="radio"/>	Homemade Chicken Noodle Soup <input type="radio"/>
ROW 10	Processed Cheese Slices <input type="radio"/>	Hard-Boiled Egg <input type="radio"/>	Cheddar Cheese <input type="radio"/>	Peanut Butter <input type="radio"/>	Unsalted Mixed Nuts <input type="radio"/>

HEALTHY EATING OVERVIEW

SODIUM

This section will explain why it is important to look at how much sodium is in the foods we consume.

KEY MESSAGES

- Sodium is a mineral found in salt.
- All types of salt are high in sodium.
- Most of us eat too much sodium; more than double the amount we need. Healthy children only need 1000-1500 mg of sodium per day; healthy adults only need 1500 mg of sodium per day.
- Food labels can help you make healthy food choices.
- Over 75% of sodium we eat comes from processed foods such as cheese, deli meats, pizza, sauces and soups.
- Pre-packaged foods, ready-to-eat foods, fast foods, and restaurant meals are often high in sodium.

Reference: [Healthy Families BC \(https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium\)](https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium)

Why Sodium?

When children consume too much sodium, they develop a preference for high sodium foods, which results in less healthy choices throughout their life. Teaching children about salt or sodium and creating an environment where lower salt choices are readily available supports their health and learning. Sodium is found in salt (sodium chloride) and other products like baking soda (sodium bicarbonate), monosodium glutamate (MSG), and sodium nitrite/nitrate, which is used for curing meat. It is the sodium in salt which can be harmful to our health.

The *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools* include sodium as one of the criteria for classifying foods into groups that determine whether the food or beverages can be sold to students in public schools.

Eating too much sodium can be harmful to your health.

Adapted from: [Sodium 101 \(http://www.sodium101.ca\)](http://www.sodium101.ca)

Recommended Resources

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- Sodium 101 (www.sodium101.ca)
- Dietitians of Canada – Sodium Sense (<http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-A-Z/Blood-Pressure/Sodium-Sense-factsheets.aspx>)

