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](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium))
  - Sodium Sense tool ([www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/sodium-sense](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/sodium-sense))
- HealthLink BC ([www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca))
  - Call 811 and speak with a registered dietitian
- Dietitians of Canada
  - Sodium 101 ([www.sodium101.ca](http://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.

**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.

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

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)
Recommended Resources

- Healthy Families BC (www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium)
- Sodium 101 (www.sodium101.ca)