

# Is it a Little or a Lot?

## Sodium Learning Activity



Action Schools! BC

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SODIUM

Most people eat too much sodium. Awareness of excessive sodium in some of the foods we eat is an important step in enabling students to make informed and healthier decisions about their food choices. Students will analyze some of the foods they regularly eat and determine whether they have a little or a lot of sodium.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



### BIG IDEAS

- Healthy choices influence our physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
- Learning about similarities and differences in individuals and groups influences community health.

### CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES:

- Investigate and analyze influences on eating habits.
- Identify factors that influence healthy choices and explain their potential health effects.
- Reflect on outcomes of personal healthy-living goals and assess strategies used.
- Explore strategies for promoting the health and well-being of the school and community.

### CONTENT

- Factors that influence personal eating choices.
- Sources of health information.



# 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 is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

## COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL HEALTH CONNECTIONS



### RELATIONSHIPS AND ENVIRONMENTS

- Ensure students are aware of what inclusive behaviours are by allowing, honouring and encouraging all students to participate in decision-making and by fostering an atmosphere of trust, tolerance, co-operation and empathy.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Students learn if there is a difference between the amount of high sodium foods they eat at home, compared to at school or a restaurant. If there is a difference, students can reflect as to why they eat more high sodium foods in a particular setting.

### OUR SCHOOL POLICIES

- Make healthy eating, including low sodium, unprocessed foods, a part of our classroom environment. This can be supported through following the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools*.

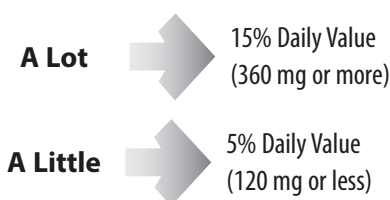
## PREPARATION

- Review the *Sodium* section of the *Healthy Eating Overview* (included with this activity).
- Provide, or have students bring in, a variety of empty food packages. They can also research the sodium content of foods from restaurants and company websites on the internet.

## IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS

- Gather the students in a circle to begin this inquiry. Circles represent important principles in the First Peoples worldview and belief systems, especially interconnectedness, equality, and continuity - <http://firstnationspedagogy.ca/circletalks.html>. Facilitate a discussion around the sources of sodium in our diets. Ask students for examples of food or drinks high in sodium.
- Invite students to bring empty food packages (including boxes, clean jars or bottles) from home; or provide a variety of selections for the students to pick from. They can also research this information on the internet.
- In groups, have them evaluate the % Daily Value for sodium on the Nutrition Facts table, and determine whether they have a little (5% Daily Value or less) or a lot (15% Daily Value or more).
  - Ask students to hold up products that have a little sodium and then ask them to hold up samples that have a lot of sodium for the class to see.
  - NOTE: Nutrition Facts tables on food packaging give the amount of sodium in milligrams (mg) and the % Daily Value based on the stated serving size. If you eat more than that serving size, you will get more sodium. The Nutrition Facts serving size is not based on Canada's Food Guide Serving. %DV on the food label is based on 2400mg of sodium. This amount is more than the 1500mg recommended intake for this age group.

## Sodium per Serving



5 ml salt = 1 tsp = 2,300 mg sodium = 2.3 g sodium

- Ask students to present their findings to the class, including whether any of their results were surprising.
- Have students refer to any of the packages brought into the classroom, and examine how they could consume more than the recommended daily maximum for sodium.
- Encourage students to verbalize which types of food generally have a high level of sodium (highly processed, those with a lot of packaging, those that are ready-to-eat).
- Ask students if they know of any reduced-sodium products (e.g., low sodium soups, sauces like soya sauce, deli meats and cheeses).
- Have students determine lower-sodium choices for themselves and set personal goals using SMART principles (refer to the Extension Activity *Vegetables and Fruit Journal* for SMART goal understanding, available at [www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources](http://www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources)).
- Build a classroom display illustrating foods that have a little sodium that can be used in place of foods that have a lot of sodium.

## EXTENSION OF LEARNING

- Have students research the nutrition information available from various fast food restaurants (many of these are available online). Have them design a brochure for a healthy, new restaurant that considers low sodium requirements (ensuring menu items that have a little sodium). Find out how they advertise their restaurant to customers (e.g., TV, website, Twitter, Facebook, etc.), and which foods they highlight in their advertisements. Share results with the class as an oral or written report or display.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Health Canada – *Using the Nutrition Facts Table: % Daily Value* ([http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt\\_formats/pdf/label-etiquet/nutrition/cons/fact-fiche-eng.pdf](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt_formats/pdf/label-etiquet/nutrition/cons/fact-fiche-eng.pdf))
- 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
  - Lower Sodium (Salt) Resources (<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating/lower-salt-resources>)
- Informed Dining ([www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/informed-dining](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/informed-dining))
- Sodium 101 ([www.sodium101.ca](http://www.sodium101.ca))

# 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](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium))
- Sodium 101 ([www.sodium101.ca](http://www.sodium101.ca))
- Dietitians of Canada – Sodium Sense (<http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-A-Z/Blood-Pressure/Sodium-Sense-factsheets.aspx>)

