

Making Fast Food Healthier

Action Schools! BC

Sodium Learning Activity



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SODIUM

Students will learn about making healthier choices when eating fast food and how healthy eating fuels the body so they can grow, learn, and be active. The lesson will focus on strategies to decrease high sodium choices.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



BIG IDEAS

- Understanding ourselves and the various aspects of health helps us develop a balanced lifestyle.
- Personal choices and social and environmental factors influence our health and well-being.

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES:

- Explain the relationship of healthy eating to overall health and well-being.
- Identify and describe factors that influence healthy choices.
- Examine and explain how health messages can influence behaviours and decisions.
- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being.

CONTENT

- Practices that promote health and well-being, including those relating to physical activity, sleep, healthy eating, and illness prevention.



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

- Encourage students to put up their posters of healthy choices in a hallway or cafeteria to show others within the school what they have learned.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- As a class, investigate fast food choices in your community that offer lower-sodium and healthier meal choices.

PREPARATION

- Review the Sodium section of the *Healthy Eating Overview* and *Educator Backgrounder* (both included with this activity).
- Gather poster-making supplies (paper, magazines, scissors, markers, glue, etc.).

IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS

- Begin lesson with 2 minutes of concentrative meditation-this focuses the attention on the breath, an image, or a sound (mantra), in order to still the mind and minimize thoughts.
- Begin by asking students what fast food means to them. What is their favourite fast food? Why do they like it? Discuss.
- Ask students to identify a fast food meal that they think is particularly unhealthy (e.g., double or triple burger with cheese and bacon, large fries and a large pop). How would their mind and body feel if they ate that kind of meal before playing soccer or before some other activity? Remind students that healthy food fuels the body so that they can grow, learn, and be active.

- Lead a brief discussion as to why these meals can be unhealthy. Fast food meals are often:
 - High in fat, sugar, and sodium, and low in the nutrients and fibre that a body needs to be healthy.
 - Large portion sizes, often more than a body needs in one meal. In addition they tend to have a high number of calories, often well over half of required daily caloric intake can be found in one meal.
 - Low in vegetables and fruit.
- Explain to students that most of us eat too much sodium; more than double the amount we need.
- Ask students how they could make fast food healthier (record student responses for all to see).
 - Add any suggestions that the students may not have covered (refer to list provided in the *Educator Backgrounder*).
- Put students into pairs and distribute poster-making supplies to each pair.
- Explain to students they will visually represent an unhealthy fast food meal that is high in sodium on one side of the poster and a healthier alternative meal that is lower in sodium on the other side (cut-out pictures or drawings may be used). Have students identify and label why the alternative meal is healthier.

EXTENSION OF LEARNING

- Have the students write a letter explaining at least three reasons why they should eat a variety of healthy snacks (e.g., provides more energy, makes me feel better, keeps me healthy, etc.). May need to brainstorm ideas and create a list on chart paper for students to make reference to.

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
 - Lower Sodium (Salt) Resources (<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating/lower-salt-resources>)
- Sodium 101 (www.sodium101.ca)

EDUCATOR BACKGROUND

MAKING FAST FOODS HEALTHIER

Favourite fast food meals can be healthier if food choices, cooking methods, and portion sizes are considered. The following list includes ideas for making fast food meals healthier.

- Ask for your meal to be cooked with no salt and no MSG if possible.
- Omit cheese if meats are included.
- Ask for gravy, sauces and salad dressings “on the side” and use only small amounts.
- Ask for grilled instead of fried.
- Choose smaller portions; share the portion served with a friend, or take leftovers home.
- Ask for extra vegetables to be added to burgers and sandwiches (e.g., tomatoes, lettuce, onion, peppers, cucumber, etc.).
- Choose a single meat patty rather than two or three patties.
- Ask for no butter or other sauces.
- Instead of fries, choose baked potato wedges, salad, or veggie sticks.
- Drink water or milk instead of sugary drinks like pop or iced tea.
- Skip the milkshake or ice cream for dessert, opt for some fresh fruit instead.
- For fast food breakfasts, choose eggs and whole wheat toast and ask to substitute the bacon, sausages, or ham with a side of fresh fruit.

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

