

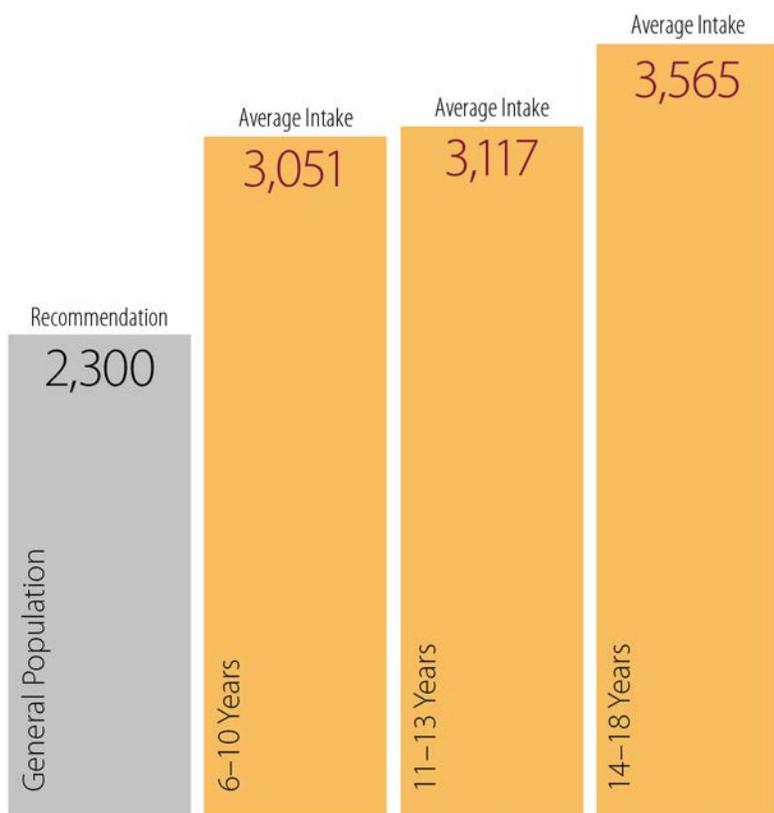
# High Sodium Intake in Children and Adolescents: Cause for Concern

Sodium intake in children and adolescents is high, comparable to that in adults. Higher sodium intake in children and adolescents is associated with higher blood pressure, which is a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke among adults.

Eating less sodium can lower blood pressure somewhat in children and adolescents. Lowering blood pressure during childhood can help lower the risk for high blood pressure as an adult. A 2012 study of U.S. children and adolescents found that higher sodium consumption was associated with increased blood pressure. This effect was even greater in overweight and obese participants compared to normal weight participants.

Importantly, studies suggest infants' and children's preference for sodium is shaped by dietary exposure, so the less sodium children consume, the less they want.

## Average Sodium Intake (mg/day)



Source: *What We Eat in America*, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2011-2012.

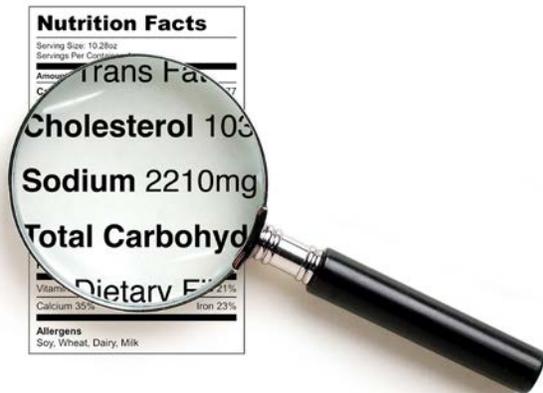
## Top 10 Sodium Sources People Aged 6-18 Years



# Help Your Family Consume Less Sodium with These Tips

## At the grocery store

- ▶ Read food labels and compare the sodium amount in different products, then choose the options with the lowest amounts of sodium. Some varieties of bread can vary from 80 to 230 mg of sodium per slice! That can make a big difference in lunchtime sandwiches.



- ▶ Choose packaged foods labeled “low sodium” or “no salt added” when possible.
- ▶ Select fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables with no salt or sauce added.
- ▶ When buying prepared meals, look for those with less than 600 mg of sodium per meal.<sup>†</sup>
- ▶ Ask your grocer if they have a low sodium shopping list available.
- ▶ Ask to speak to the registered dietitian (RD) at your local grocery store to learn more about buying lower sodium products. If your grocer doesn’t have an RD, ask your doctor for a referral. There may be a fee involved, but an RD can provide valuable guidance on reducing your family’s sodium intake and managing blood pressure.

***Similar to adults, children and adolescents consume most of their sodium from processed foods and meals eaten away from home.***

## At home

- ▶ When cooking, use alternatives to replace or reduce the amount of salt you use such as garlic, onion powder, citrus juice, or salt-free seasonings.
- ▶ Prepare rice, pasta, beans, and meats from their most basic forms (dry and fresh) when possible. If you don’t have a lot of time, allow dry beans to soak overnight then drain and store them in the refrigerator so they are ready to cook for dinner the next day.
- ▶ Prepare healthy meals and snacks in advance so they are ready to eat during the week. Chop and pre-portion fruits and vegetables, prepare a salad for the week, and make dressings and sauces from scratch.
- ▶ Encourage your children to eat more healthy, lower sodium foods by making it fun.
  - ▷ Have your kids help you freeze fresh fruit for popsicles.
  - ▷ Create a low-fat or nonfat yogurt and herb dip for vegetables.
  - ▷ Make trail mix using unsalted nuts, dried fruit, and whole grain cereal.



## On the go

- ▶ Ask for nutrition information before you order, then select a lower sodium meal.
- ▶ Ask that no salt be added to your meal.
- ▶ Split a meal with your child or another family member.
- ▶ Keep takeout and fast food—such as burgers, fried chicken, and pizza—to an occasional treat.

Learn more at

**[www.cdc.gov/salt](http://www.cdc.gov/salt)**

<sup>†</sup>600 mg of sodium is the criterion for the Food and Drug Administration’s “healthy” label claim.