

## Shasta County Lowers Sodium in Kids Meals at Local Restaurants

December 2013



### Problem

In Shasta County, California, rates of high blood pressure are higher than the state average. Eating too much sodium can lead to high blood pressure, a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

### Project

In partnership with the Healthy Kids Choice (HKC) program, Shasta County Health and Human Services developed a sodium standard for kids meals at local restaurants and worked with the HKC program to ensure meals met the new guideline.

### Outcomes

A total of 33 HKC meals met the new sodium guideline, and 15 of those meals achieved an additional reduction in sodium of 150 milligrams per meal, on average.

### Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Salt [www.cdc.gov/salt](http://www.cdc.gov/salt)
- Healthy Shasta: Healthy Kids Choice <http://healthyshasta.org/healthykidschoice.htm>

### For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30333  
**Telephone:** 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/  
TTY: 1-888-232-6348  
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[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**Statement of Problem:** Approximately 90% of Americans aged 2 years and older consume higher amounts of sodium than are recommended by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*. Sodium consumption at levels higher than recommended can lead to high blood pressure, a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke. These problems are particularly concerning among residents in Shasta County, California, where self-reported rates of high blood pressure are higher than the state average. Healthy food and beverage choices—including limiting sodium intake—during childhood can help lay the foundation for healthy dietary behaviors later in life. However, reducing sodium intake can be difficult, especially when more than 75% of the sodium in the American diet comes from processed and restaurant foods.

**Project Description:** In 2010, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) received a 3-year Sodium Reduction in Communities Program grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDPH engaged Shasta County Health and Human Services to carry out various sodium reduction strategies in the county, including working with independent restaurants to reduce sodium content in prepared food. Shasta County began this effort by partnering with the Healthy Kids Choice (HKC) program supported by Healthy Shasta, a local partnership to promote healthy and active living among northern California residents. Through HKC, restaurants voluntarily offer and promote healthier meal options for children.

Eight independent restaurants, serving hundreds of HKC meals each month, participated in the HKC program with Shasta County. The following strategies were used to achieve and measure sodium reduction:

- Consult with restaurant owners on how important it is to reduce sodium in menu items.
- Work with restaurant owners to identify strategies to reduce sodium (e.g., purchase lower sodium ingredients, modify recipes).
- Provide nutrition analysis for menu items.
- Promote HKC restaurants through radio ads, social media, and community events.

**Outcomes:** Shasta County successfully collaborated with the HKC program to develop a sodium standard—770 milligrams (mg) or less per meal—for the HKC criteria. Before the partnership began, nutrient analysis showed that 33 HKC meals already met the new sodium guideline, and each restaurant offered at least one of those meals. A follow-up analysis showed that of the 33 meals that already met the guideline, 15 achieved greater reductions in sodium, which resulted in an average sodium reduction of 150 mg (26.2%) per meal.

**Conclusions:** Through partnership with the HKC program, Shasta County demonstrated that local, independently owned restaurants can successfully reduce sodium content for select menu items. This success can be attributed, in part, to the commitment and energy put into building synergistic relationships in the community, working to accommodate the needs of restaurants, and restaurants' commitment to making healthful changes.