

# Reduce Sodium in School Meals



USDA has new sodium requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Refer to page two of this fact sheet for targets and timelines. You should be working toward lowering the sodium content of school meals.

Too much salt and sodium are linked to high blood pressure. Reducing dietary sodium can lower blood pressure, which reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Nearly all Americans consume more sodium than they need.

The 2015 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend reducing daily sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) for adults and children ages 14 years and older. The guidelines recommend reducing sodium intake to 1,500 mg among persons who have prehypertension or hypertension.

One teaspoon of salt equals about 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium.

Most of the sodium we consume is in the form of salt, and the vast majority of sodium we consume is in processed foods.

## Read Nutrition Facts labels.

Foods that are low in sodium contain less than 140 milligrams (mg) per serving. Compare the sodium content of similar foods and choose products with the lowest amount of sodium per serving.

## Serve more fresh foods.

Most fresh fruits and vegetables are naturally low in sodium.

## Purchase low-sodium products when available.

## Offer high-sodium foods less often.

 Limit the use of:

- Salty, smoked or cured meat such as bologna, hot dogs, ham, luncheon meats, and sausage
- Salty snack items such as chips and pretzels
- Ready-to-eat canned foods such as soups, chili, and ravioli
- Food prepared in brine such as pickles, olives, and sauerkraut
- Food items made with cheese — try not to include too many items made with cheese over the course of a week
- Condiments — when possible, limit the portion size of condiments such as ketchup, mustard, barbecue sauce, and salad dressing

## Modify recipes that use high-sodium ingredients.

- Reduce or eliminate salt from recipes when possible
- Limit the use of ingredients such as bouillon cubes, ham base, and chicken base
- Try different herbs and spices as seasonings in place of salt
- Emphasize that salt should not be added to recipes unless it is listed as an ingredient
- Salt can be eliminated from any recipe except a recipe that contains yeast

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 slice (28g)	
Servings per Container 18	
Amount per Serving	
Calories 80	Calories from Fat 30
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 3.5g	5%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0g	0%
Sodium 110mg	5%
Total Carbohydrate 11g	4%
Dietary Fiber 1g	5%
Sugars 3g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 2%	Iron 6%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

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This chart lists the new sodium requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Implementation of the second and final targets is subject to USDA’s review of data on the relationship between sodium intake and human health.

The sodium limits listed in the chart are to be met on average over a week.

Sodium Limits and Timeline	
<p><b>Target 1: School Year 2014-2015</b></p> <p><b>Lunch</b></p> <p>≤ 1230mg (K-5)                      ≤ 1360mg (6-8)                      ≤ 1420mg (9-12)</p> <p><b>Breakfast</b></p> <p>≤ 540mg (K-5)                      ≤ 600mg (6-8)                      ≤ 640mg (9-12)</p>	<p><b>Target 2: School Year 2024-2025</b></p> <p><b>Lunch</b></p> <p>≤ 935mg (K-5)                      ≤ 1035mg (6-8)                      ≤ 1080mg (9-12)</p> <p><b>Breakfast</b></p> <p>≤ 485mg (K-5)                      ≤ 535mg (6-8)                      ≤ 570mg (9-12)</p>

## Definitions

**Herbs** are leaves, stems, and seeds from plants and are available fresh, dried, or ground.

**Spices** come from the bark, roots, seeds, and fruit of plants and trees.

## Tips for Using Herbs and Spices

The herb equivalent is *1 tablespoon of fresh herbs or 1 teaspoon dried leafy herbs or 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon ground dried herbs.*

In general, double the herbs and spices in a recipe when increasing from 50-100 servings. Increase the herbs or spices by 25% for each additional 100 servings and test the recipe.

## Storage of Herbs and Spices

Protected fresh herbs will keep up to four days in the refrigerator. Store dried herbs and spices in a cool, dry place in an airtight container. Dried herbs and spices will retain their flavor for 6 months to 1 year. Record the date of delivery on all dried herb and spice containers. Purchasing dried herbs and spices for schools twice each year to be used within a school year is a good practice.

## Foods Used for Seasoning

Foods used for seasoning include a variety of bell peppers, chili varieties, carrots, celery, garlic, leeks, onions, and shallots. These seasonings can be fresh, dried, powders, or granules. Purchase garlic, onion, and celery powders or granules; not garlic, onion, or celery salts, which have more sodium.

# Season Foods Without Salt

Herbs			
Name	Form	Taste	Uses
Basil	Fresh, dried chopped leaves	Mint licorice-like flavor	Pizza, spaghetti sauce, tomato dishes, vegetable soups, meat pies, peas, zucchini, green beans
Chives	Fresh, freeze dried	In the onion family; Delicate flavor	Baked potato topping, all cooked green vegetables, green salad, cream sauces, cheese dishes
Cilantro	Fresh, dried	Sweet aroma, mildly peppery	Ingredient in Mexican foods
Dill	Fresh, dried, seeds	Aromatic	Dill pickles; seeds in meats, sauces, salads, coleslaw, potato salad, and cooked macaroni; dill weed in salads, sandwiches, and uncooked mixtures
Marjoram	Fresh, dried whole or ground	Faintly sage like, alight mint aftertaste, delicate	Vegetables, one of the ingredients in poultry and Italian seasoning; processed foods such as bologna
Oregano	Fresh, dried leaves, ground	More pungent than marjoram, reminiscent of thyme	Pizza, other meat dishes, cheese and egg dishes, vegetables such as tomatoes, zucchini, or green beans; an ingredient in chili powder and Italian seasoning
Parsley	Fresh, dried flakes	Sweet, mildly spicy, refreshing	A wide variety of cooked foods, salad dressings, and sandwich spreads
Rosemary	Fresh, whole leaves	Refreshing, pine, resinous, pungent	Chicken dishes and vegetables such as eggplant, turnips, cauliflower, green beans, beets, and summer squash; enhances the flavor of citrus fruits; breads, rolls, biscuits Rosemary has a strong taste. Limit dried rosemary to one teaspoon per six servings (5 tablespoons for 100 servings).
Sage	Whole, rubbed, ground	Pungent, warm, astringent	Meat, poultry stuffing, salad dressings; cheese Try in small amounts when using for the first time.
Thyme	Fresh, dried whole or ground	Strong, pleasant, pungent clove flavor	Soups and stews, poultry stuffing, vegetables, breads Dried thyme has a medium intensity. Add no more than one or two teaspoons for six servings of a dish (2 to 5 tablespoons for 100 servings).

# Season Foods Without Salt

Spices			
Name	Form	Taste	Uses
Allspice	Whole berries, ground	The aroma suggests a blend of cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg; sweet flavor	Fruit cakes, pies, relishes, preserves, sweet potatoes and tomatoes
Cinnamon	Whole sticks, ground	Warm, spicy sweet flavor	Cakes, buns, breads, cookies, and pies
Cloves	Whole, ground	Hot, spicy, sweet, penetrating flavor	Ground cloves in baked goods and desserts and to enhance the flavor of sweet vegetables, such as beets, sweet potatoes, and winter squash
Ginger	Fresh, whole, cracked, ground	Aromatic, sweet, spicy, penetrating flavor	Baked goods; rubbed on meat, poultry, and fish; in stir-fry dishes
Mace	Ground	Strong nutmeg flavor	The thin red network surrounding the nutmeg fruit; used in baked goods where a color lighter than nutmeg is desirable
Mustard	Whole seeds, powdered, prepared	Sharp, hot, very pungent	Meats, poultry, fish, sauces, salad dressings, cheese and egg dishes; whole seeds in pickling and boiled beets, cabbage, or sauerkraut
Nutmeg	Whole, ground	Spicy, pleasant flavor	Baked goods, sauces, vegetables, desserts
Paprika	Ground	Sweet, mild, or pungent flavor	A garnish spice, gives an appealing appearance to a wide variety of dishes; used in the production of processed meats such as sausage, salad dressings, and other prepared foods
Peppercorns; black, white, red, and pink	Whole, ground, coarse ground	Hot, biting, very pungent	This spice has many uses in a wide variety of foods. White pepper is ideal in light colored foods where dark specks might not be attractive. Use pungent white pepper during the cooking process rather than at the end of cooking.
Red pepper (Cayenne)	Ground, crushed	Hot, pungent flavor	Meats and sauces

To access the National Food Service Management Institute's No Time To Train Lesson 33 on Herbs, Spices, and Seasonings, go to [www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=256](http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=256).

This fact sheet was adapted from: the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction fact sheet Guide for Reducing Salt And Other Sodium Containing Additives in School Meals; USDA fact sheet Season Your Foods Without Salt; the School Nutrition August 2011 magazine article *Why Seasonings Are Worth Their "Salt"*; Lesson 33—Herbs, Spices, and Seasonings from the National Food Service Management Institute's No Time To Train: Short Lessons for School Nutrition Assistants; and [2015 Dietary Guidelines](#).

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## Reduce Sodium in School Meals

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