

Children's Salt Intake: When too Little is too Much

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Salt over-consumption is infamously known to raise blood pressure. Not only is increased blood pressure the number one cause of heart disease globally, but it causes 2 out of every 3 strokes and half of heart disease cases world-wide¹. While salt over-consumption is usually only considered a problem for adults, studies suggest it is a problem for children as well^{1,2}.



According to Health Canada recommend children ages 1 to 3, 4 to 8, and 9-13 to consume 1000mg, 1200mg, and 1500 mg of salt (also known as sodium) per day respectfully. That is equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a teaspoon. However, studies on Canadian children revealed 93% of children ages 1 to 3, 77% ages 4-8, and 90% ages 9 to 13 consume more than the required amount of salt³. Furthermore, a recent study showed that students ages 12 to 13 in Southern Ontario who consumed exceedingly high levels of salt tend to be overweight or obese and develop high blood pressure².

One major reason for this excessive salt intake is the excessive consumption of processed and/or fast food. For example, take an 8-year-old and consider possible lunches he or she might often have. A slice of cheese pizza from Pizza Hut, for instance, contains 550mg of sodium, a major component of salt⁴. This amount is about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an 8-year-old's recommended daily intake. One pack of Turkey & Cheddar with Crackers Lunchable alone has 660 mg of sodium⁵. Finally, just a 6-inch Chicken & Bacon Ranch Melt sandwich contains 1290 mg of sodium, which exceeds the recommended amount of sodium an 8-year-old would need⁶.

Clearly, children can easily consume excessive amounts of sodium. The question is: what can be done? Solutions include preparing meals at home where you have control over what goes into the food and checking food labels in the grocery store or online to make healthier food choices. Adjusting habits now could lead to a healthier future for the next generation.

Want to learn more ways to reduce salt intake for your children? Find more tips in the link below: https://sodiumbreakup.heart.org/how_to_reduce_sodium