

WINTER



# ASK THE DIETITIAN

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



## Q. Is it true kids get too much sodium in their diets today?

**A.** Yes! Unfortunately, the majority of American children eat too much sodium. In fact, over 90% of U.S. school-aged kids consume more than the recommended daily limits.<sup>1</sup> Health organizations and health professionals are concerned this may increase the risk for children to develop high blood pressure, which can be a major cause of heart disease and stroke.

## Q. How much sodium is in a typical school meal?

**A.** In 2012, USDA set guidelines for the school meals program to gradually reduce the amount of sodium over a 10-year span. This way the food industry can offer more low-sodium ingredients and food products for school menus and students can adapt to these changes over time. As of the 2014-15 school year, sodium levels in school meals have been reduced by approximately 5-10% to these levels:

Grade Level	School Breakfast	School Lunch
Elementary	Less than 540 milligrams	Less than 1,230 milligrams
Middle	Less than 600 milligrams	Less than 1,360 milligrams
High School	Less than 640 milligrams	Less than 1,420 milligrams

## Q. How exactly are K-12 food and nutrition teams reducing the amount of sodium?

**A.** Here are just a few of the ways schools are slashing sodium from school meals

- Serving more fresh vegetables
- Using fresh salsa, different herb and spice blends and lower-sodium condiments
- Using low-sodium tomato products like spaghetti sauce, salsa, diced tomatoes and tomato paste
- Using low-sodium or sodium-free canned and frozen vegetables
- Eliminating salt during cooking where possible
- Removing salt shakers from school cafes

## Q. That's great, but how do these reduced-sodium school lunches taste?

**A.** By keeping up with popular food trends, Aramark chefs work with school cafeteria managers and students to find out what students like and dislike. To accommodate students' tastes, chefs use herbs and spices to enhance flavor in foods without adding salt. After all, any healthy lunch or breakfast isn't beneficial if kids won't eat it!

<sup>1</sup> Cogswell ME, et al. Vital Signs: Sodium Intake Among U.S. School-Aged Children -2009-2010. MMWR, 2014;63(64):789-797



Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your doctor and a registered dietitian to get advice about a diet and exercise plan that's right for you. [visit myhealthyforlife.com](http://myhealthyforlife.com)



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