



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *A Little Less Salt*

*Sodium Intake Among U.S. School-Aged Children --- 2009-2010*

Recorded: September 2, 2014; posted: September 11, 2014

*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Excessive sodium consumption is a leading cause of high blood pressure. Reducing sodium intake early in life can decrease the likelihood of hypertension, a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Dr. Mary Cogswell is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of a low-sodium diet for children. Welcome to the show, Mary.

[Dr. Cogswell] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Mary, what kinds of health problems can develop in children who consume high levels of sodium?

[Dr. Cogswell] Well, the taste for salt is established at an early age by what children eat, and eating too much sodium can set children up for high blood pressure now and heart disease and stroke later.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is a *healthy* level of sodium consumption?

[Dr. Cogswell] We should limit our intake to less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium a day. About nine in 10 school-age children are eating too much, even before salt is added at the table, and that's a problem because one in six U.S. children has blood pressure above the normal range for their age.

[Dr. Gaynes] Mary, why are school-age children consuming too much sodium?

[Dr. Cogswell] Children eat too much sodium *before* salt is added at the table. It's the sodium that's already in many of the processed foods from the store, from restaurants, and even school cafeterias that matters. The problem is, we can't take the sodium out, and it's not just one food. On average, about 43 percent of sodium school-age children eat comes from 10 common food types, such as pizza, breads, lunch meats, and snacks, like chips. Some of these foods, like bread and rolls, don't taste salty but we eat a lot of them.

[Dr. Gaynes] How can parents lower the amount of sodium in their child's diet?

[Dr. Cogswell] Food choices matter. Here are three things we can do to help our children have better food choices. First, we can try to be healthy models for our children by eating fruits and vegetables without added sodium. Second, when we're shopping or eating out, we can look at or ask for nutrition facts and choose the lowest sodium option. For example, one brand of deli turkey can have 600 more milligrams of sodium per serving than another. Third, we can support nutrition standards that lower sodium in foods, such as the new nutrition standards that lower sodium in school meals and at school events starting in 2014.

[Dr. Gaynes] Mary, where can listeners get more information about low-sodium diets?

[Dr. Cogswell] Listeners can go to [cdc.gov/salt](http://cdc.gov/salt).

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Mary. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Mary Cogswell about the importance of diets low in sodium.

Parents— model a healthy diet by eating fruits and vegetables without added salt, check nutrition labels for lower sodium options, and ask for lower sodium choices when dining out. Good dietary habits developed in childhood can last a lifetime.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.