

# CALLING ALL SODIUM SLEUTHS!



*In these activities, students will learn the reasons why being a sodium sleuth can lead to better health.*

## SETUP:

Cover the list of food items (see “Activity One”) before students enter the gym.

## ACTIVITY ONE

### ♥ Materials:

one sheet of chart paper, labeled as shown  
additional sheet of chart paper  
tape  
salt  
measuring spoons  
2 colorful paper plates  
food items that are listed on the chart shown  
paper towel or paper plate (for sandwich-making step)  
fast-food bag, labeled “1,250 mg” on one side

2 slices white bread = 274 mg  
1 serving (1 oz.) honey ham = 495 mg  
1 T. mayonnaise = 88 mg  
1 tsp. mustard = 57 mg  
1 oz. slice of American cheese = 468 mg  
medium tomato slice = 1 mg  
lettuce leaf = 7 mg  
12 oz. can of regular soda = 15 mg  
1 oz. serving of pretzels = 326 mg  
2 chocolate sandwich cookies = 93 mg  
TOTAL: 1,824 mg

- 1.** Explain to students that you were running late this morning and need to make your lunch. Talk about how you want to eat a healthy lunch that, among other things, isn't too high in sodium. Explain that sodium—a main ingredient in salt—is an essential nutrient but that Americans tend to get way too much of it in their diets. That's not good because too much sodium is related to all types of health issues, including heart disease.
- 2.** Point out that most of the sodium Americans eat is not from the salt shaker—instead, it's found in many of the foods we eat. Being aware of the sodium in foods may help someone lower or avoid high blood pressure.
- 3.** Measure out ½ tsp. of salt plus a pinch (about 1,500 mg of sodium) onto a colorful paper plate and show students the amount. Explain that people should not consume more than this amount of sodium in a day.
- 4.** On a second paper plate, measure out 1½ tsp. of salt. After students compare the amounts, explain that the second plate shows the amount of salt most Americans actually consume every day—3,400 mg, more than twice the recommended amount.
- 5.** Ask a student to help you make a sandwich using the listed ingredients. Name each item as you add it to the sandwich. Then pull out a snack bag of pretzels, two chocolate sandwich cookies, and a can of soda, explaining that these items will round out your lunch.

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## ACTIVITY ONE (CONTINUED)

6. Ask students which ingredients or foods in your lunch likely have sodium. Then reveal the list to show students that your lunch actually goes over the recommended daily amount of sodium.
7. Announce, “Well, since this meal is so high in sodium, I’ll just eat a sandwich from a fast-food place.” Pull out the fast-food bag and tell students that inside is a grilled chicken club sandwich. Compare the amount of food in the lunch just made to the fast-food sandwich. Since the fast-food bag only contains a sandwich and nothing else, the sodium content will be much lower than the lunch you just made, right? Turn the fast-food bag around to reveal the sodium content of the sandwich (written on the outside of the bag): 1,250 mg. Point out that this amount is not only almost as high as the lunch you made, but it is also very close to the daily recommendation.
8. Explain to students that packaged foods like “The Salty Six”—breads and rolls, cold cuts and cured meats, pizza, poultry, soups, and sandwiches—are high in sodium. Tell students that sodium can be sneaky, so they need to be “sodium sleuths” and check nutrition labels to find out a food’s sodium content.

## ACTIVITY TWO

### ♥ Materials:

30 empty food containers—select items that have high sodium content  
three large boxes  
chart paper and marker

1. Set up the food containers at one end of the gym on a long table.
2. Divide students into three teams and have the teams stand behind a starting line several yards from the table. Place a large box beside each team.
3. At your signal, the first student on each team runs to the table and grabs a food container that he thinks has a smaller amount of sodium than the other items on the table. Then he takes the item back, puts it in his team’s box, and tags the next player on his team. The game continues until the table is empty.
4. Have each team look at the nutrition label on each item in its box and call out its sodium amount as you list it on a chart.
5. Point out to students that every item on the list has an unhealthy amount of sodium. Explain that people often don’t realize that many processed and packaged foods are full of sodium. On the other hand, eating lots of fruits and vegetables and lower-sodium foods and not reaching for the salt shaker will help people stay within the recommended 1,500 mg daily limit. It will also help reduce their risk of developing conditions related to too much sodium, such as high blood pressure, stroke, heart failure, and kidney disease.

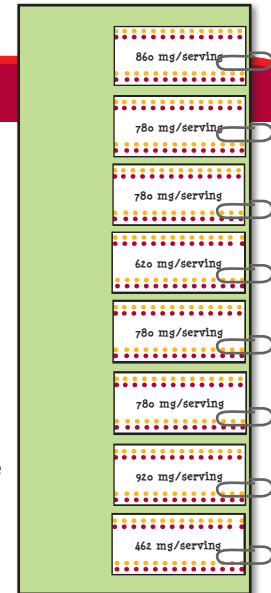
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## ACTIVITY THREE

### ♥ Materials:

tape  
piece of card stock  
8 large paper clips  
8 boxes of crayons  
8 twelve-inch circles cut from card stock or another sturdy paper  
frozen pizza label cards, sodium cards, answer key card (see the pattern pages)

1. Explain to students that sodium is often found in convenience foods—like frozen dinners, frozen pizzas, and microwave meals. These kinds of foods are okay to eat sometimes, but when eaten regularly they push you well past the recommended sodium limit of 1,500 mg per day.
2. Divide the class into eight groups. Give each group a box of crayons, a 12-inch circle cut from card stock or another sturdy paper, and a frozen pizza label card from the provided reproducible.
3. Challenge each group's students to spend five minutes quickly coloring their circle to look like the pizza listed on their card. When time is up, collect the pizzas and cards.
4. Ask eight students to come to the front. Tape a different pizza and its matching card to the front of each student's shirt.
5. Hold up a piece of card stock on which you've clipped the sodium cards as shown. Explain that these cards are labeled with the amount of sodium found in one serving of each frozen pizza (equal to  $\frac{1}{4}$  pizza).
6. Challenge students, one at a time, to clip each sodium card to the frozen pizza they think it matches. (Use the answer key on the provided reproducible to check the guesses.) If a student is correct, the child wearing that pizza sits down.
7. Continue until students match all sodium amounts to the correct pizzas. Then compare the amounts, pointing out that the sodium in a serving of the homemade pizza is significantly less than the amount in the frozen pizzas.
8. Tell students that studies have shown that when people eat a lower sodium diet for a period of time, they actually begin to prefer lower sodium foods and the foods they used to enjoy taste too salty.



pepperoni pizza

four-meat pizza  
(hamburger, chicken,  
ham, sausage)

hamburger pizza

Hawaiian pizza

four-cheese pizza

sausage pizza

sausage and  
pepperoni pizza

homemade cheese  
and veggie pizza

860 mg/serving

780 mg/serving

780 mg/serving

620 mg/serving

780 mg/serving

710 mg/serving

920 mg/serving

462 mg/serving

**Answer Key Card**

pepperoni pizza:  
860 mg/serving

four-meat pizza (hamburger,  
chicken, ham, sausage):  
780 mg/serving

hamburger pizza:  
780 mg/serving

Hawaiian pizza:  
620 mg/serving

four-cheese pizza:  
780 mg/serving

sausage pizza:  
710 mg/serving

sausage and pepperoni  
pizza:  
920 mg/serving

homemade cheese and  
veggie pizza:  
462 mg/serving