

SALT REDUCTION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Tips for parents: at home, grocery shopping, eating out, engaging children

Salt, the source of sodium, is often added to Chinese dishes during the cooking process. We are used to high-sodium foods because we are taught to prepare Chinese dishes with a variety of sauces that are high in sodium. By now, we know that high-sodium diet is related to multiple diseases including hypertension, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease. The truth is Chinese food, and food in general, can still taste delicious with less or no salt! Know that it takes time for our palate to get used to the natural flavor of the ingredients. After following a salt-reduction plan persistently for at least 4 weeks, you will become very sensitive to high-sodium foods and start enjoying the natural flavor in nutrient-packed foods!

Reducing salt at home

- There are two ways to approach salt reduction
 - Gradual reduction: for one dish per week, reduce to 50% of usual usage or replace salt with herbs and spices
 - Complete reduction: eliminate or replace salt with herbs and spices for all the dishes at once.
- Replace part/all of the salt with vinegar, scallion, ginger, garlic, pepper, sesame, and other herbs and spices (**Handout: What can I Change in My Recipe?**)
- Replace snack corner with fruit baskets to reduce additional salt intake
- Freeze them for best flavor (**Handout: Freezing F&V**)

Reducing salt at grocery shopping

- Buy seasonal fruits and vegetables for best flavor with a good price! (**Handout: What's in Season?**)
- Choose foods that are lower in sodium (**Handout: How to Read Nutrition Facts Label?**)
- Skip these ready-made foods that are usually high in salt for longer shelf-life:
 - 鹹菜醬菜類 (雪裡紅, 芥菜類, 醬蘿蔔, 榨菜)
 - 熟食肉禽類 (香腸, 火腿, 醃肉, 扒雞, 燒鴨, 叉燒肉, 牛肉乾等)
 - 速食麵類 (方便麵)
 - 醬和調料類 (豆瓣醬, 黃醬, 甜麵醬, 豆腐乳)
 - 豆製品 (臭豆腐, 五香豆, 豆腐乾, 素火腿)
 - 小吃 (薯片, 薯條, 膨化食品)
 - 咸魚蝦類 (鹹魚, 蝦米, 蝦皮, 魚片)
 - 鹹花生和堅果
 - 鹹蛋
- Instead, cook similar dishes at home (with reduced to no salt) and explore alternative replacement

Reducing salt when eating out

- Ask for reduced/no salt or reduced sauce or sauce on the side
- Skip the side dishes; they are often high in salt and sugar

Engaging children in the process of reducing salt

Building lifelong healthy eating habits starts at a young age, which can directly affect their physical, mental, and intellectual health into adulthood. Establishing a healthy relationship with food is a very important part of their at-home education. Have your children engage in some hands-on activities by helping you with meal planning, grocery shopping, and food preparation!

Meal planning:

- Ask your children what they liked/didn't like last week and why
- Make notes on their likes/dislikes. If their likes are mostly processed and unhealthy foods, skip those for this week's meal and talk about trying something new
- Modify the recipes with your kids; ask their input (**Handout: What can I Change in my Recipe?**)

Grocery shopping:

- Have your children go grocery shopping with you and ask them to help you pick up fruits and vegetables
- Freshness and nutrition: Meanwhile, facilitate them in deciphering fresh vs. non-fresh and why it is important to choose one piece of fruit over another
- Ownership & color variety: ask your children to help you pick out different colors of fruits and vegetables ("pick a rainbow of fruits and veggies!")
- Snacks/desserts: if food is considered a choice of treat, choose healthier alternatives
 - Pick a few sweeter or pricier fruits as very special treats. That way, it becomes a healthy food that kids crave for!
 - Fruits that are good for dipping: Apples or bananas with peanut butter
 - Fruits that are sweet: Frozen grapes, longan, lychee

Food preparation:

- Ask children to help get things from the fridge or pantry
- Ask children to involve in steps that you consider safe (toss, mix, taste)