

# Salt

## Reducing Sodium in the Diets of American Children

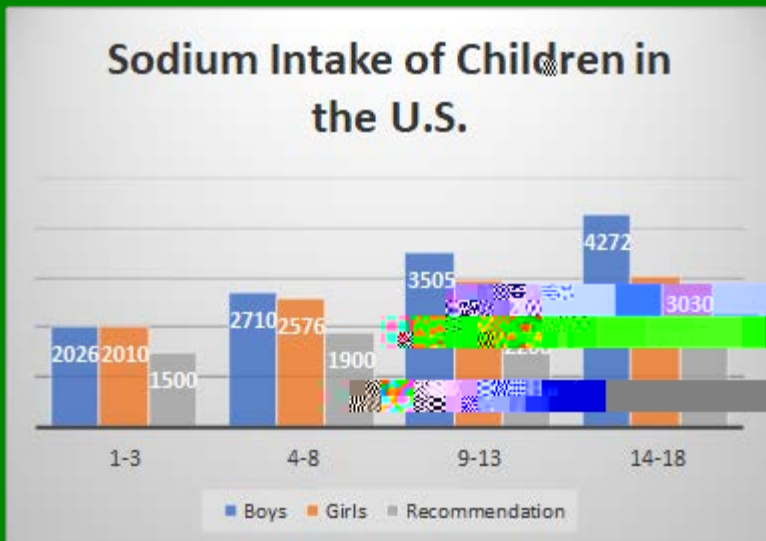
### OVERVIEW

More than 90 percent of school children consume at least 50 percent of the recommended daily allowance of sodium. The taste of sodium is formed by dietary exposure, the less



5

The American Heart Association advocates for a multifaceted reduction in sodium consumption in the U.S. diet for children and adults. This, combined with a nutritious diet that relies on fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and nonfat dairy products, beans, fish, and lean meat should help to improve the health of generations of Americans. **Examples of sodium-rich foods include pizza, Mexican dishes,**



Adapted from: NHANES data, 2007-2010

- × The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 empowered the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to adopt a gradual 10-year reduction to align sodium levels in school meals with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans as recommended by the National Academy of Medicine. The first phase has already been implemented and schools are supposed to implement the final phase by the 2022-23 school year. In December 2018, the United States Department of Agriculture issued a new final rule that delayed the second phase of sodium reduction to the 2024-25 school year and eliminated the third and final phase of sodium reduction. Children who eat a school meal consume 26 percent of their sodium from cafeteria foods.<sup>12</sup> Eliminating the final phase of sodium reduction means that school meals will not be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans as required and threatens to reverse the progress made in improving nutrition and decreasing sodium consumption in children.

## ECONOMIC AND HEALTH BENEFITS

A government-supported national policy to reduce sodium by 10 percent over ten years would be cost effective in most countries across the world, including the U.S. Its cost effectiveness is seen even without accounting for healthcare savings that come from preventing heart attacks.