



8TH GRADE | LESSON PLAN ▾

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The Truth About Sodium

Lesson Overview

In this lesson students will explore how to choose healthy meal and snack options, and how sodium affects the human body. Engaging **activities** weave together two **informational text articles**; a **video** illustrating how eating sodium affects the body; an **interactive application** exploring the sodium content of snack food; and a project on students' eating habits.

TIME REQUIRED:

Lesson activities are grouped into three sessions, each approximately 45 minutes long, with a short warm up and wrap up.

SUPPLIES:

- Video Projector
- Computers with internet access
- **SuperTracker:** <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/>
- SuperTracker Reflection Handout (p. 5)
- Snack Comparison Handout (p. 6)

Lesson Structure

Each lesson is created like a “menu,” allowing you to pick and choose from a variety of learning activities designed to engage all children and all learning styles. Lessons also include video, interactive tools, and challenges developed specifically to promote engagement and exploration.

Subject Connections

Science, English Language Arts

Key Vocabulary

Added sugars, nomadic, refined grains, saturated fats, sodium, preserve

Transfer Objective

Students will be able to independently use their learning from these activities to:

- Choose healthier snack options every day.
- Decrease overall sodium intake by identifying foods with large amounts of sodium and then finding alternatives.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify high sodium and low sodium snack options.
- Compare different snacks and make a recommendation based on the amount of sodium.
- Identify ways in which high

sodium intake may affect their bodies in the long term.

- Explain how to use MyPlate as a guide to choosing healthier snack options.
- Identify dietary changes that could help reduce sodium intake including cooking at home more often, consuming fewer commercially prepared foods, and evaluating food labels.

Enduring Understandings

- Evaluating foods and labels before you eat can help you make better choices.
- As sodium intake increases so does risk of developing high blood pressure.
- You can reduce sodium intake by cooking at home more often, consuming fewer commercially prepared foods, and evaluating food labels.
- Choosing healthier snacks can have a big impact on the healthfulness of middle school diets.

Essential Questions

- *Why do I snack the way I do?*
- *How does healthy snacking affect my life?*
- *How can I make decisions that keep me healthy?*
- *Why does what we eat matter in the long run?*

Warm Up (10 minutes)

THINK-PAIR-SHARE: With a partner, discuss: *What kind of snacks do you usually eat? How do you choose when and what to snack on?* Invite students to share what they discussed with the entire class. As students share their responses, jot down their answers on the board.

Choosing Healthy Snacks (45 minutes)

1. READ: “Choosing Healthy Snacks” informational text article. (30 minutes)

Answer reading comprehension questions and discuss as a class.

2. EXPLORE: “Shake Off the Salt” Interactive Application (15 minutes)

Students can explore the interactive as a group or individually. Either set up students individually on the interactive or put the interactive up on a projector and complete the activity together as a class.

For this second option, you can facilitate participation in several ways:

- Have the whole class vote at each snack selection point by having them raise their hands or put up cards (i.e. green for the snack on the left, or blue for the one on the right).
- Structure the choice at each selection point as a "human barometer" activity. Have students walk to the side of the room representing the snack they would choose, have a few volunteers explain their reasoning, and pick the snack that has the most votes.
- Create a more competitive game by dividing the class into two groups and having each group go through the interactive. Whichever group chooses the least amount of sodium wins. You can even create a split-screen with the interactive in two different browser windows and alternate between the two, so that the groups are taking turns between choices, rather than waiting for the whole interactive to be completed before getting to participate.



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Screen shot of
“Video” goes here

Introduction to Sodium (45 minutes)

1. WATCH: “Name of Video To Come” video (90 seconds). (15 minutes)

Discuss as a class: *What did the video show you about the impact of sodium on your health? Why do you think young people don’t think about the long-term effects of the foods they eat? Why is it important to think about the long-term effects?*

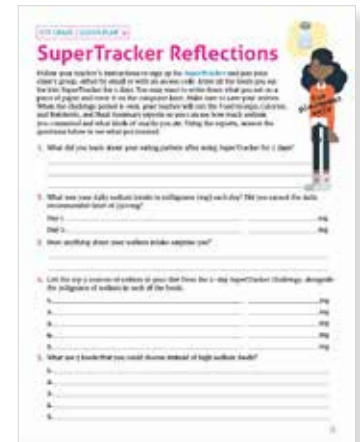
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Screen shot of
“Shake Off the Salt”
Interactive Application

1. INVESTIGATE: SuperTracker Activity (30 minutes)

- Students will use the **USDA’s SuperTracker** groups tool to explore their eating habits, deepen their understanding of sodium, and see how much sodium they regularly consume. Refer to the **SuperTracker Groups & Challenges User Guide** (<https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/Documents/SuperTracker%20Groups%20And%20Challenges%20User%20Guide.pdf>) for instructions on setting up a group challenge.
- After setting up your account and creating your private group, invite students to join. Students can be invited via email or by sharing the access code. Assign students to enter all the foods they eat for a 2-day period. At the end of the challenge, you can print the following reports: Food Groups, Calories, and Nutrients (which allows you to see how much sodium was consumed); and Meal Summary (which allows you to look at specific meals like snacks).
- At the end of the week, instruct students to fill out the **SuperTracker Reflection Handout** (p.5) to reflect on what kinds of meals and snacks they ate, and how much sodium they consumed. Afterwards, discuss their answers as a class.



Sodium and Your Health (45 minutes)

1. READ: “Sodium and Your Health” informational text article. (30 minutes)

Answer reading comprehension questions and discuss as a class.

2. INVESTIGATE: Sodium Around Us (15 minutes)

Students will pick two snacks readily available to them either in school, in the cafeteria or in vending machines, or at nearby convenience stores. Students will compare the two food items, with the goal of identifying which one they think is a better snack choice. Students will enter the food items into **Food-A-Pedia** to see the complete nutrition information and use the **Snack Comparison Handout** (p. 6) to compare. As a class, students can share their comparisons and make a list of the best snack options available to them.



Wrap Up (10 minutes)

REFLECT: Ask students to reflect on these questions individually, and then discuss as a group: *How has what you’ve learned about healthy snacking affected your snack choices? If you were to share one message from these activities with a friend, what would it be?* Discuss as a class and record student responses on whiteboard or chart paper.

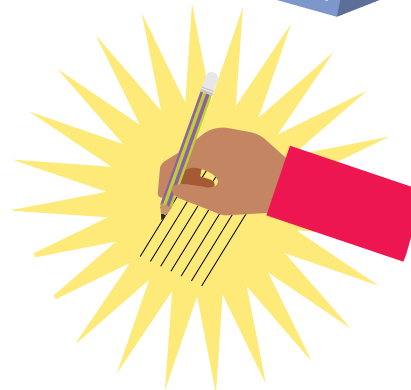
PROJECT: Planning Healthy Snacks

Students will develop a healthy snack plan for their week. Students will identify morning and afternoon snacks for a full 7-day week and create a grocery list for all the snack ingredients. *How can they choose creative and varied options?* Students will then practice writing a persuasive letter to their parents/guardians asking them to help them access the healthy snacks on their plan.



Persuasive Writing: Healthier Snack Options

Students will create a persuasive writing piece convincing their school to carry healthier snacks. Students will identify the decision-makers with power over cafeteria and vending machine offerings, and decide which arguments are most convincing. The persuasive writing piece can take the form of a newspaper op-ed, letter to a school administrator, or blog post.



SuperTracker Reflections

Follow your teacher's instructions to sign up for **SuperTracker** and join your class's group, either by email or with an access code. Enter all the foods you eat for into SuperTracker for 2 days. You may want to write down what you eat on a piece of paper and enter it on the computer later. Make sure to save your entries. When the challenge period is over, run the Food Groups, Calories, and Nutrients, and Meal Summary reports so you can see how much sodium you consumed and what kinds of snacks you ate. Click the "Run Report" button on your SuperTracker group page. Then pick the specific report you want to see. See page 9 -11 of the SuperTracker Groups and Challenges User Guide for more help (<https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/Documents/SuperTracker%20Groups%20And%20Challenges%20User%20Guide.pdf>). Using the reports, answer the questions below.

1. After reading the Food Groups, Calories, and Nutrients, and Meal Summary reports, what did you learn about your eating pattern?

2. Take a look at the Food Groups, Calories, and Nutrients report. What was your daily sodium intake in milligrams (mg) each day? Did you exceed the daily recommended limit of 2300mg?

Day 1: _____ mg

Day 2: _____ mg

3. Does anything about your sodium intake surprise you?

4. Using the Food Groups, Calories, and Nutrients report, List the top 5 sources of sodium in your diet from the 2-day SuperTracker Challenge, alongside the miligrams of sodium in each of the foods.

1. _____ mg

2. _____ mg

3. _____ mg

4. _____ mg

5. _____ mg

5. What are 5 foods that you could choose instead of high sodium foods?

1. _____

2. _____





3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Snack Comparison Handout

Pick two snacks readily available in school, in the cafeteria or in vending machines, or at nearby convenience stores. Enter the snacks into [Food-A-Pedia](#) to see the complete nutrition information. Record the information in the handout below and decide which snack is the healthier option.

	Snack 1:	Snack 2:
<p>Sodium Remember, your daily limit is 2300mg.</p> 	Sodium in milligrams (mg):	Sodium in milligrams (mg):
<p>Added Sugar Remember, calories from added sugars should not exceed 10% of your total daily calories.</p> 	Added sugar in grams (g):	Added sugar in grams (g):
<p>Saturated Fat Remember, calories from saturated fats should not exceed 10% of your total daily calories.</p> 	Saturated fat in grams (g):	Saturated Fat in grams (g):
<p>Other nutrients Does your snack have more than 20% DV of important nutrients like Vitamin A, Vitamin C, fiber, or B vitamins?</p> 	Percent daily value (%DV) of nutrients:	Percent daily value (%DV) of nutrients:

What snack is the best option and why?

Think of which one is lowest in sodium, added sugars, saturated fats and has more beneficial nutrients. Write down your snack choice and 3 “selling points” if you had to pitch this snack to the rest of your class.
