

## COMBATting HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE IN KIDS



Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. High blood pressure is associated with higher rates of stroke, end-stage renal disease, and congestive heart failure. More black women have high blood pressure than women of other races and men of any race. Black people begin to develop hypertension at an earlier age than white people, and it is more likely to be more severe.

What if we could change those statistics?

We can.

All of the reasons that hypertension looks different in black and white populations are unclear, but some include relationships with doctors, difficulty in accessing care and information, a disparity in healthy food options, sensitivity to salt, and higher rates of obesity.

There are steps that we can all take to decrease our children's chances of developing these conditions and change these statistics in the future. We can take control of our own habits, setting a good example by watching our diet, increasing exercise, asking questions, and staying informed.

Over time a diet that's high in sodium, or salt, can lead to hypertension and heart disease. The American Heart Association recommends lowering salt intake to improve heart health. So, our first weapon against hypertension is changing our relationship, and our kids' relationship, with salt.

On average, children in the United States ages 2-18 get take in more than 3100 mg of sodium daily. Below is the recommended amount.



Some things we can do to move closer to these recommendations include reading nutrition labels and keeping our intake at the recommended amount. Avoid or limit processed food and salty snacks. Replace them with fresh foods, fresh or dried fruits and vegetables, unsalted nuts, and whole grains.

### Top 10 Sources of Sodium for Kids Ages 6–18

1. Pizza
2. Mexican-mixed dishes
3. Sandwiches
4. Breads and rolls
5. Cold cuts/cured meat
6. Soup
7. Salty snacks
8. Cheese
9. Plain milk
10. Poultry

Source:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/salt/sodium\\_and\\_children.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/salt/sodium_and_children.htm)



Ages 6-17: at least 1 hour



Ages 3-5: at least 3 hours

Being active and keeping our weight in check will also arm us in the battle against high blood pressure.

According to the National Institutes of Health, children should be physically for a specific number of hours daily. Activity does not have to be completed at one time. It can be broken up throughout the day.

Playing a sport is a good way to develop a consistent pattern of exercise and discipline. Outside of school, many communities provide activities that are affiliated with recreation centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, dance, and martial arts studios, running clubs, and others. There are many ways to stay fit at home, including taking walks or jogging, riding bikes, gardening, and jumping rope.

Our best defense in the fight for our children's health is keeping ourselves educated. It's very important that we find health care providers who we feel comfortable talking to. Ask questions. Ask for your child's blood pressure reading at each visit. Share your concerns and ask for suggestions for improvement.



By making good choices for our kids, keeping them active, and staying informed we can set ourselves up for the win, putting our children on the path to a healthy heart for life.

Sources:

[Kids and sodium serious risks and alarming realities - Mayo Clinic Health System](#)

[https://www.cdc.gov/salt/sodium\\_and\\_children.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/salt/sodium_and_children.htm)

[www.heart.gov](http://www.heart.gov)