

Most pre-packaged meals, snacks for toddlers contain too much salt

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Nearly 75 percent of commercial pre-packaged meals and savory snacks for toddlers are high in sodium, according to research presented at the American Heart Association's Epidemiology and Prevention/Nutrition, Physical Activity and Metabolism 2013 Scientific Sessions.

In the first study to look at the [sodium content](#) in U.S. baby and toddler foods, researchers compared the sodium content per serving of 1,115 products for babies and toddlers using data on major and private label brands compiled by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Baby food was categorized as intended for children less than one year old, and toddler food was categorized as intended for children between the ages of one and three.

A product was defined as high in sodium if it had more than 210 mg of sodium per serving. Toddler meals had significantly higher amounts of sodium than baby meals, and the amount of sodium in some of the toddler meals was as high as 630 mg per serving – about 40 percent of the 1,500 mg daily limit recommended by the [American Heart Association](#). The foods with the most sodium were savory snacks and meals for toddlers.

"Our concern is the possible long-term health risks of introducing high levels of sodium in a child's diet, because high blood pressure, as well as a preference for [salty foods](#) may develop early in life. The less sodium in an infant's or toddler's diet, the less he or she may want it when older," said

Joyce Maalouf, M.S., M.P.H., ORISE, lead author and Fellow at the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) in Atlanta, Georgia. Consuming excessive amounts of sodium has been linked to the development of [high blood pressure](#) in scientific studies.

"Parents and other caregivers can read the [nutrition facts labels](#) on baby and toddler foods, to choose the healthiest options for their child," Maalouf said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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