

School lunches helping children from getting too-salty diets

January 7 2014, by Lindsey Elliott

New findings show that many Americans are at risk for high blood pressure because of too much sodium in our diets—and the risk is especially high for children.

The study was conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The findings show that about eight out of every 10 children ages 1 to 3 are at risk for [high blood pressure](#), and the risk goes up with age: Nine out of every 10 Americans ages 4 and older are at risk.

About 8 percent of the salt children eat comes from [school meals](#). Kansas State University dietitians say new school meal guidelines are aimed at reducing the amount of salt children eat.

"The schools provide more [nutritious meals](#) than [fast food restaurants](#) just in the fact that they're really focusing on the [sodium level](#), trying to cut back on the sodium level and that there's more of a focus on offering fruits and vegetables," said Amber Howells, instructor in dietetics at Kansas State University.

The CDC report finds that even a 400 milligram per person reduction in U.S. sodium intake could save billions of health care dollars.

Kevin Sauer, an assistant professor of dietetics, said the idea is to influence the children's eating patterns for a lifetime.

"The thought is that with children and obesity on the rise, that if we can

start modeling appropriate behavior while they're in school, that maybe they'll adopt these practices going on through life," Sauer said.

Provided by Kansas State University

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