



Feeding the under 3s  
the food they need

# Salt in your toddler's diet

## Guidance & Tips for Parents

[www.littlepeoplesplates.co.uk](http://www.littlepeoplesplates.co.uk)

### Why is salt important for my toddler's diet?

Sodium, which is in salt, is important for healthy muscle, stomach and nerve function as well as being an essential component in the blood. Children need some sodium to grow.

### If it's good for growth, why should I limit my toddler's salt intake?

Children require only a small amount of salt in their diet for healthy growth and will naturally eat these amounts within a healthy diet. Children with a high salt diet may develop a preference for salty foods and we know that a high salt intake in later life may cause health problems such as high blood pressure.

### What is meant by hidden salt?

When most people think about salt they think about shaking salt on food or adding salt to cooking. However, about three-quarters of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy, including processed foods such as ready meals, sauces and canned foods.

### How do I keep the salt in my toddler's diet at a healthy level?

Some nutritious foods are preserved with salt, such as cheese, ham, bacon and yeast extract spread. These nutritious foods are part of a healthy diet but ham and bacon should be limited to once or twice per week. You can cut down on excess salt in your toddler's food by cutting out crisps and other packet snack foods, and cutting back on takeaways.

#### **ALWAYS...**

- ...use herbs and spices rather than salt to flavour your cooking
- ...choose canned food that is unsalted or low in salt
- ...read the label on packaged food (even those foods aimed at children) and choose those that are lower in sodium or salt





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### Can you recommend some quick tips to reduce my toddler's salt intake?

#### DON'T...

- ...add salt to food at the table
- ...give your toddler salty snacks such as crisps
- ...give your toddler adult ready meals or takeaway food unless you have checked the nutritional information. If you can't avoid it, then serve a small portion with some extra vegetables
- ...give food with added salt if it already contains cheese, ham or bacon (these foods are preserved with salt). Added salt will be listed in the ingredients list

### Do cereals have too much salt for toddlers?

Some contain more salt than others therefore it is best to choose cereals with as little as possible. Some breakfast cereals are enriched with vitamins and iron and make a good contribution to your toddler's daily diet. You should not exclude cereals; it's more about making the right choices. In addition, add fruit and milk to make a healthier option and...

#### DO...

- ...choose cereals lower in salt (less than 0.7g of salt or 0.27g of sodium per 100g of cereal)
- ...choose wholegrain cereals some of the time
- ...choose cereals low in sugar (less than 8g of sugar per 100g of cereal)
- ...try to avoid cereals with oil or fat in the ingredients list

### What about in babies - does the same advice apply?

Babies (children under one year) need only a very small amount of salt (even less than toddlers), because their kidneys can't cope with large amounts of salt. Babies who are breastfed will get the right amount of salt through breast milk. Infant formula contains a similar amount. Cows' milk should not be given to babies as it also contains too much sodium. When you are weaning, remember not to add salt to food you make for your baby or give to him or her. Be careful not to give him or her manufactured foods that aren't made specifically for babies.

Reference and for further information please visit:  
<http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet/fss/salt/howmuchsalteat>

