Kids in U.S. eating nearly as much salt as adults

By Allison Aubrey, NPR

Yes, we love salt. It makes everything taste better. But as a society, we're eating way too much of it. And, so are our children.

A study from researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that children in the U.S. between the ages of 8 and 18 are eating, on average, 3,387 mg per day. That's about the same amount as adults. But it's a lot more than the 2,300 mg daily limit recommended by the federal dietary guidelines.

And the result? Janelle Gunn, a public health analyst with the CDC, says it's pretty clear. "We found that higher sodium intake was associated with higher blood pressure," she says.

The association was strongest among children who were overweight. "We found among overweight and obese participants (in the study), that for every 1,000 mg of sodium they consumed, their blood pressure response was seven times greater (compared to healthy-weight children)," explains Gunn.

Overall, the researchers found that about 15 percent of the children in the study had high either elevated or high blood pressure. In adults, high blood pressure is considered a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

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