Don’t Go Breakin’ Your Heart

*Eat Better; Take the Pledge to Reduce Sodium for You and Your Loved Ones*

Lesson Plan

**Call To Action**
Eat Better; Take the Pledge to Reduce Sodium for You and Your Loved Ones

Take the Sodium Pledge online at www.heart.org/sodium. And get it going viral by inviting those in your social networks to join you in pledging to reduce their salt intake.

**Community Need**
It’s time to move on. The relationship is just not working. As much as you’ve come to love salt, it’s also breaking your heart.

Our bodies need a little salt for normal functioning. However, if you’re like most Americans, you’re probably getting much more than your body needs (even if you never pick up the salt shaker). Over time, this can damage your heart and blood vessels. It can even put you at risk for heart attack and stroke. So, kiss excess salt goodbye! And, be assured that even with less sodium, food can still be full of flavor.

Almost everyone can benefit from a new relationship with salt. Blood pressure rises with age, and eating less sodium now will help curb that rise and put us on a path to a healthier life. Kids aren’t immune to the heartbreak either. Nearly 80 percent of 1-3 year-olds and more than 90 percent of 4 to 18 year-olds in the US get too much sodium. Kids are not immune from developing elevated blood pressure, which can put them at higher risk for cardiovascular disease when they get older. “Don’t Go Breakin’ Your Heart” reviews the link between salt intake and cardiovascular risk. It provides the push needed to break off the love affair with salt and embrace a healthier relationship.

**Three Important Points**
Our lives are busy and many of us are on information overload. Thus we focus on three key health messages:

- Too much sodium increases your risk for heart attack and stroke.
- Most of the sodium we eat comes from packaged, processed and restaurant foods.
- Take steps to reduce your sodium when shopping, cooking and eating out.
EmPowered To Serve Health Check

The EmPowered To Serve Health Check is a way for community members to develop an awareness about their blood pressure and current weight. The goal is to get at least 15 percent of your community organization checking these health measures. And, with it in hand, to complete the My Life Check® personal health assessment using your group’s unique URL.

There are many ways you can conduct this optional EmPowered To Serve health check:

- Before the program, ask participants to check their blood pressure and weight at home, Higi Station (portable health kiosk) or at their doctor’s office.
- Provide a scale and blood pressure machine on site. Ask participants to check their weight and blood pressure before the program gets under way.
- Invite a local healthcare provider or partner with a healthcare organization to check blood pressure and weight for participants at the start of the program.
- If you can host a screening, try to offer blood glucose and cholesterol checks, too.

Length of Program

- Budget 1 – 1 ½ hours to present the lesson.
- If you are conducting a health screening, add 20 minutes or more before the meeting for participants to get their blood pressure and weight checked.

Program Materials

No Access to a Slide Projector? Print out the slides and put them in a three-ring binder. Use the printed slides as a script to deliver your health lesson.

- Flip chart and markers.
- Handouts (one copy per participant):
  - Salty Six: Did You Know infographic.
  - Busted: 7 Salty Myths.
- Pens
- Goody bags: Reach out to local businesses such as hospitals, wellness centers, local clinics and other health organizations. Ask them about donating giveaways for participants. Also check out the American Heart Association store (shop.heart.org) for brochures to buy in bulk. For example:
  - Nutrition Know and Go Cards.
  - Simple 7 Know and Go Cards.

Audiovisual Needs

- Projector for PowerPoint slides.
- Internet connection (optional).

Wrap-Up

Reminder! Once your participants have left, be sure to complete the Ambassador Questionnaire. For details, see your Ambassador Guide page 11.
Slide Program with Talking Points and Discussion Questions

The “Notes” section of the PowerPoint slides includes scripted comments for the lesson. Use this to help walk through the lesson. To help engage participants, the script includes discussion questions. For your reference, below is a list of these questions:

- How many of us like salty foods and snacks?
- How many of us grab the saltshaker to add more salt to food before taking that first bite?
- Does anyone in your family have high blood pressure?
- Are you surprised about the average amount of salt consumed in one year?
- How many of you knew about the link between sodium and health before today?
- Does sea salt have the same amount of sodium as table salt? (In most cases, sea salt and table salt both have about the same amount of sodium. However, always check the Nutrition Facts label to compare how a sea salt product compares to table salt. Some sea salts are specially formulated to have less sodium than table salt.)
- Are you surprised by how little sodium our body needs?
- Were you surprised to learn that even if you don’t use the saltshaker, you’re likely getting too much sodium?
- What foods in the Salty Six surprised you? (FYI: The Salty Six foods aren’t necessarily foods that are the highest in sodium; they are the foods that contribute the most sodium to our diets (by percentage). For example, breads and rolls are No. 1 largely because we eat a lot of them each day.
- Does anyone currently make an effort to eat less salt or sodium? If so, are you willing to share some of the challenges with the group?
- Do you know someone who watches his or her sodium intake? How do they eat differently from others that you know?
- How many of you read nutrition labels before you purchase a food?
- What benefits are there to eating fewer processed foods and less sodium?
- Should we eat a totally salt-free diet? (The answer is no. Sodium is an essential nutrient to stay healthy, but we need only small amounts—much less than Americans’ average intake.)
- What percent of your food choices currently come from eating packaged, processed or restaurant foods?
- What three things might you commit to do to help reduce the sodium you eat?
- Will this change be difficult for you? Why or why not?
- Are there things you might do to make this lifestyle change easier to embrace? [NOTE: If no response, offer suggestions to the group. For example, make the change as a family or get strength from others making the change within the ETS community.]