

Pizzas take a toll on kids' health, shows new study

© ImageSource/Corbis

Go ahead, give your kids pizza. Just maybe not so much of it. A new study found that American kids take in more calories, fat and salt on days they eat pizza. That's not necessarily because it's worse than a burger. It has a lot to do with the way pizza lends itself to snacking—and overindulging.

When pizza was on the menu, kids ages 2 to 11 years consumed 84 more calories and 134 more milligrams of sodium than on days they didn't eat the food, while teens took in an extra 230 calories and 484 milligrams of sodium, research published on Monday showed.

About 20% of kids eat pizza on any given day, and it's their second-highest source of calories behind desserts, authors said. So parents should try to avoid giving pizza as a snack. And if it's served as a meal, it should be made with healthier ingredients in a bid to limit the number of slices consumed, Powell said.

"This is not saying don't eat pizza," said Powell, a professor of health policy and administration at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "It's an opportunity for us to make some small changes because it's such a prevalent item in children's diets."



A SLICE OF CONCERN

US pizza purveyors say they're on board with that. Domino's Pizza Inc (DPZ) has introduced slices for school lunch programmes made with whole white wheat crust and lower fat, company spokesman Tim McIntyre said in an e-mail.

Pizza Hut has introduced new products, like the low-calorie Skinny Slice. "We believe that every item on the Pizza Hut menu can be part of a balanced diet," said Doug Terfehr, a spokesman for the chain owned by Yum! Brands Inc.

"Moderating pizza consumption should become our goal to reduce obesity in US," William Dietz, the study's author said. **BLOOMBERG**