



# LET'S TALK ABOUT THE KIDNEYS

## DID YOU KNOW?

The kidneys are just one of our lifesaving organs needed for our bodies to function. A living donor can donate one kidney to someone else in need and still lead a normal life. One example of a living kidney donor is actress Francia Raisa, who is singer and actress Selena Gomez's best friend. Selena received a kidney from Francia in 2017.

## MATERIALS:

- 1 A variety of foods that have a nutrition label (frozen pizza, sauces, canned foods, breads, boxed foods, fruits, etc.)
- 2 Pencil or pen
- 3 Calculator or paper

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The kidneys are about the size of your fist and shaped like a bean. Most people are born with two kidneys; however, some are born with only one. The kidneys are located by your lower back, which is different from where many other organs are (near the stomach). The kidneys help remove toxins and excess water from the blood.

There are certain genetic diseases and even birth defects that can cause the kidneys to no longer function properly. We cannot always determine why the kidneys stop functioning, but one thing we can do to help protect them is to exercise and eat less sodium (salt). Too much sodium in a person's diet can cause high blood pressure. High blood pressure is bad for your kidneys. Our bodies typically only need around half a teaspoon or 1,000 milligrams of sodium per day, but the average American eats about two-and-a-half teaspoons or 6,000 milligrams per day!

## HOME ACTIVITY:

- 1 Gather 5-7 different food items that have a nutrition label.
- 2 Without looking at the nutrition label, try to put the foods in order from the smallest to the largest amount of sodium (by serving size).
- 3 Check the nutrition labels to see if you're correct.

## CHALLENGE:

Gather several of the foods you typically eat in a day. Using a pen and paper or a calculator, add up the total amount of sodium by looking at each of the nutrition labels. Were you over 2,000 mg? If so, write down a few things you could do to reduce your sodium intake.

\*The maximum amount of sodium we should eat per day is around one teaspoon or 2,000 milligrams.