

Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools

Ask for Better Snack Foods and Drinks at Your School! Learn about the *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools* and What You Can Do to Support Them

Since school is a place where you can learn about how to eat a healthy diet, it makes sense to have healthy food and drink options available there. Did you know that the foods and drinks offered through your school's meal program must meet certain nutritional guidelines? Well, they do. Did you know that many schools sell foods and drinks in the à la carte line in the cafeteria, school stores, snack bars, or vending machines that aren't required to meet any nutritional guidelines? That's right. These foods are sometimes called "competitive foods" because they compete with school meals.

Recently, a national group of scientific experts issued strong guidelines and recommendations about these competitive foods. The guidelines, entitled *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth*, recommend that U.S. schools examine the nutritional quality of foods and drinks sold or provided as snacks and make sure they meet minimum nutritional standards. As a result of the recommendations, some schools have chosen to change their snack food to healthier options. However, many schools continue to offer or sell foods and drinks that do not meet the guidelines.

For schools that offer or sell snack foods and drinks, some of the recommended healthy foods and drinks are

- Fruits and vegetables (fresh or dried).
- Whole grains, such as whole-grain cereals or breads.
- Nonfat, low-fat dairy, lactose-free and soy products.
- 100% fruit juice.
- Water.

Schools are also being asked to *stop* offering certain unhealthy foods and drinks in cafeterias, vending machines, stores, snack bars, or at fundraising events and school and classroom parties. These items include

- Soft drinks, such as soda or "pop."
- Candy/gum.
- Cookies.
- Snack cakes.
- Regular potato chips.
- Other high-fat, high-calorie foods and drinks.

For afterschool activities for high school students only, the guidelines allow for additional snacks and beverages that are not too high in sugar or fat.



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Healthy Food Options Explained

Grade Level/Time of Day	Examples of Foods that Can Be Offered
For elementary, middle, and high school students before, during, and after school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual fruits—apples, pear slices, or fruit cups packed in juice or water. • Vegetables—baby carrots, broccoli, edamame. • Dried or dehydrated fruit—raisins, apricots, cherries, bananas. • 100% fruit juice or 100% low-salt vegetable juice. • Low-fat, low-salt whole-grain crackers or chips. • Whole-grain, low-sugar cereals. • 100% whole-grain mini bagels. • 8-ounce servings of low-fat fruit-flavored yogurt with no more than 30 grams of sugars. • 8-ounce servings of low-fat or nonfat chocolate or strawberry milk with no more than 22 grams of sugars. • Low-sodium, whole-grain bars containing sunflower seeds, almonds, or walnuts.
For high school students only, after school only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-salt baked potato chips (200 mg or less of sodium), crackers, and pretzels. • Animal crackers with no more than 35% of calories from sugars. • Graham crackers with no more than 35% of calories from sugars. • Caffeine-free, calorie-free, non-fortified soft drinks. • Ice cream bars low in sugar and fat.

What can you do to support nutrition standards at your school?

- Find out what the competitive food policies are at your school.
- Tell your parents, teachers, and principal that you want snack foods and drinks that meet science-based nutritional standards to be offered in your school.
- Ask for foods and drinks that meet the recommended nutritional standards to be used for school fundraising events, classroom celebrations, and other school-based activities.
- Make smart snack choices and eat foods that are healthy for you, such as fruits and vegetables.
- Educate your fellow students about nutrition so they can become advocates for promoting healthy options in your school.
- Research and write an article about the science-based nutrition guidelines/standards for the student newspaper or Web site. Information is available from the Institute of Medicine (www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx).
- Read information about the nutrition guidelines during student announcements or post it prominently on school bulletin boards.

Where can you get more information?

- Stallings VA, Yaktine AL, editors. *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2007. Available from: <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Healthy Youth: Nutrition and the Health of Young People*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2007. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition/facts.htm>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2005. Available from: <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/report/default.htm>.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Adolescent and School Health
www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth



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