



National Alliance for Nutrition & Activity

# Update National School Nutrition Standards

## WHY:

### USDA Nutrition Standards for Foods Sold Outside of Meals (vending machines, a la carte & school stores) Are Outdated


- Nutrition science has evolved since the U.S. Department of Agriculture implemented its nutrition standards in the 1970s. The current standards no longer make sense from the standpoint of nutrition science, current dietary patterns, and public health concerns.
- Current nutrition criteria for foods sold outside of meals only apply to “foods of minimal nutritional value” that may not be sold in the food-service area during meal times. Under this standard, schools cannot sell gum and breath mints, yet still can sell cookies, candy, and French fries.

### Nutritionally Poor Foods Are Widely Available in Schools

- Between 1991 and 2005, the percentage of middle schools with vending machines increased from 42% to 82% and the percentage of high schools from 76% to 97%.<sup>1</sup>
- Although healthy foods and beverages are increasingly available, the most common items sold outside of school meals include candy, sugary drinks, chips, cookies, and snack cakes.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

### What's a Junk Food?

(According to current USDA regulations)

<u>Allowed</u>		<u>Not Allowed</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruitades (with little juice)</li> <li>French fries</li> <li>Ice cream bars</li> <li>Candy bars</li> <li>Cookies</li> <li>Chips</li> <li>Snack cakes</li> <li>Doughnuts</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seltzer water</li> <li>Caramel corn</li> <li>Popsicles (without fruit juice)</li> <li>Jelly beans</li> <li>Chewing gum</li> <li>Lollipops</li> <li>Cotton Candy</li> <li>Breathmints</li> </ul>

### Junk Food Is Having a Negative Impact on Children's Health

- Over the last two decades, rates of obesity have tripled in children and adolescents.<sup>5</sup>
- The sale of low-nutrition foods in schools outside of school meals is associated with increases in children's body mass index (BMI).<sup>6</sup> It is estimated that a fifth of the average increase in BMI in teens between 1994 and 2000 was attributable to increased availability of junk food in schools.<sup>7</sup>

## Current Practices Are Costly to Federal Taxpayers

- By developing a pattern for eating low-nutrition foods, children increase their risk of developing diet-related diseases, such as obesity, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. U.S. health-care costs due to obesity are \$123 billion a year, half of which are paid for by federal taxpayers through Medicare and Medicaid.<sup>8</sup>

## *NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION STANDARDS SHOULD BE UPDATED TO...*

### Protect Taxpayer Investment in School Meals

- The federal government invested \$10 billion in FY 2007 in school lunches and breakfasts.<sup>9</sup> Current food practices and policies for food sold outside of school meals can undermine that taxpayer investment.
- The majority of the nation's 14,000 school districts are not equipped to develop science-based nutrition standards for schools. Nationwide, only 30% of school districts prohibit the sale of junk foods in school vending machines.<sup>2</sup>
- Two-thirds of states have weak or no nutrition standards for foods sold outside of meals.<sup>10</sup>
- A minimum protective nutrition standard for food sold outside of school meals nationwide is needed to protect the integrity of the school lunch program and the health of all children in all states.



### Improve Children's Diets

- On school days, an estimated 35-50% of children's total calories are consumed at school.<sup>11</sup>
- School food policies limiting access to high-fat, high-sugar foods are associated with fewer purchases of those items by students.<sup>11</sup>
- Nationally, 94% of elementary schools, 96% of middle schools, and 73% of high schools have closed campuses, which means most students are already unable to leave campus.<sup>2</sup> Stronger standards will further limit their access to sugary drinks, candy, and other low-nutrition foods.

### Support Parents and Nutrition Education

- Selling low-nutrition foods in schools sends children the message that good nutrition is unimportant and undermines nutrition education.
- Parents want improved school foods. One national study found that most parents felt the nutritional health of students should be a school priority; 90% agreed that more

healthy snacks and beverages should be available in vending machines and on school a la carte lines.<sup>12</sup>

**The sale of junk food in schools undermines parents' ability to help their children eat healthfully. Parents should not have to worry how their children will spend their lunch money.**

The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA) is a coalition of 300 organizations that advocates policies to promote healthy eating and physical activity to help reduce the disabilities, premature deaths, and costs caused by diseases and conditions such as heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity.

**For more information, contact either Arianne Corbett at the Center for Science in the Public Interest at 202.777.8358 or <acorbett@cspinet.org>; Jennifer Weber at the American Dietetic Association at 202.775.8277 or <jweber@eatright.org>; Jim Vanderhook at the National PTA at 202.289.6790 x211 or <jvanderhook@pta.org>; or Derek Scholes at the American Heart Association at 202.785.7927 or derek.scholes@heart.org.**

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<sup>2</sup> O'Toole T, et al. "Nutrition Services and Foods and Beverages Available at School: Results from the School Health Policies and Programs Study 2006." *Journal of School Health* 2007, vol. 77, pp. 500-521.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). *Dispensing Junk: How School Vending Undermines Efforts to Feed Children Well*. Washington, D.C.: CSPI, 2004.

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<sup>6</sup> Kubik M, Lytle L, Story M. "Schoolwide Food Practices Are Associated with Body Mass Index in Middle School Students." *Archive of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 2005, vol. 159, pp. 1111-1114.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson P and Butcher K. "Reading, Writing, and Raisinets: Are School Finances Contributing to Children's Obesity?" National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) Working Paper Series. Cambridge, MA: NBER, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> The Endocrine Society and the Hormone Foundation. *Economic Impact of Obesity*. Chevy Chase, MD: The Endocrine Society and the Hormone Foundation. Accessed at <<http://www.obesityinamerica.org/economicimpact.html>> on October 8, 2008.

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<sup>12</sup> Kubik M, Lytle L, Story M. "Soft Drinks, Candy, and Fast Food: What Parents and Teachers Think about the Middle School Food Environment." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 2005, vol. 105, pp. 233-239.