

Snack Foods Guideline Recommendations for Schools



The Institute of Medicine issued new guidelines April 2007 that recommend more nutritious snack food and a la carte offerings for schools. They suggest that junk foods like potato chips, doughnuts, chocolate-covered ice cream and sugary drinks should be banned at all school levels. This landmark report, prepared by food and nutrition experts, addresses discretionary purchases of "competitive" foods, not the bagged lunches that children bring to school or what is served in the federal school lunch and breakfast programs.

"On school days, children get 30% to 50% of their calories there," says Margo Wootan of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a Washington, D.C.-based consumer group. "They eat lunch, one or two snacks and sometimes even breakfast. What they are fed in school has a huge impact on their diets now and the attitudes about food over their lifetime." And kids learn by example, she says. "You don't want to teach kids nutrition in the classroom and then send them into the hallway with vending machines stocked with candy, chips and soda."

'Tiers' of food: The new Institute of Medicine report offers recommendations for what schools should offer in vending machines, stores, a la carte lines and at fundraising events. Foods are divided into two tiers.

- **Tier 1** products could be offered to all schoolchildren in elementary through high school during the regular school day and at after-school activities. Foods should provide at least one serving of a fruit, vegetable, whole grain or non-fat or low-fat dairy product. Foods should contain no more than 35% of calories from total sugars. Snacks would contain no more than 200 calories per packaged portion. **Foods that meet the criteria:** Apples, fruit cups, raisins, dried fruit, baby carrots, whole-grain low-sugar cereals, some multigrain tortilla chips, some granola bars, non-fat yogurt with no more than 30 grams of added sugars, per 8 ounces, fruit salad with yogurt, turkey sandwich. **Beverages that meet the criteria:** Water, skim or 1% milk, soy beverages, 100% fruit or vegetable juice. Because juice is high in calories it should be limited to 4-ounce servings for elementary and middle school; 8 ounce servings for high school students. Free water - either tap or bottled—should be made available. **Beverages that do not meet the criteria:** Sugary soft drinks, sports drinks, sugary juice drinks.
- **Tier 2** products would be available only to high school students after school. These products do not necessarily contain a serving of vegetables, fruits, whole grains or low fat or non-fat dairy but must meet the same basic requirements on fat, sugar and other criteria as Tier 1 items. **Foods and beverages that meet the criteria:** Single servings of baked potato chips, low-sodium whole-wheat crackers and pretzels, graham crackers, animal crackers, caffeine-free diet soda and seltzer water. Sports drinks should not be accessible during the school day because of the high sugar content. They can be made available at the discretion of coaches to athletes who do vigorous activity for more than an hour. Elementary and middle school organizations only should offer Tier 1 products at fundraisers and parties during the school day. A high school organization could offer Tier 1 and Tier 2.

Read the entire Institute of Medicine of the National Academies report, *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way toward Healthier Youth*, on their web site, www.iom.edu.

Also a very informative report from the Center for Science in the Public Interest, *Sweet Deals: School Fundraising Can Be Healthy and Profitable*, is on their web site, www.cspinet.org/schoolfundraising.pdf.