



## Smart Snacks in School

# How Can You Help?

Most schools sell foods and beverages outside of the school meal program through vending machines, school stores, and snack bars.<sup>1,2</sup> In addition, schools may sell foods and beverages in the cafeteria that are not a complete school meal. These *a la carte* items may be a main or side item from a school meal or other items that are not part of the school meal. For example, students could purchase the vegetable side dish from the school meal without purchasing the entire meal. In some cases, students will have the option to purchase snacks (e.g., chips) and beverages that are not part of the school meal. Foods and beverages sold outside of the school meal programs during the school day must meet new Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.<sup>3</sup> These standards promote options that have whole grains, fruits, vegetables, or low-fat dairy, as their main ingredients, and set limits for calories, sugar, fat, and sodium.<sup>3</sup> States and school districts may have additional rules about snack foods and beverages in these locations.<sup>3</sup>

Knowing the answers to the following questions can help you support Smart Snacks in your child's school. If you don't know the answers to these questions, check out the school handbook or school website, attend a school wellness meeting or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, or simply ask your child's teacher.

1. What are the district's plans for implementing the new Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards?
2. What does the school or district wellness policy, or school improvement plan, say about foods and beverages sold in vending machines, snack bars, and school stores?
3. Is there a group (e.g., wellness committee, PTA, or other parent group) that would be interested in, or is already addressing, nutrition issues in schools?
4. Does the school or district wellness policy require or encourage healthy options, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, be offered when other food is available?
5. Who is the main contact person for each of the locations where students can buy snack foods and beverages (e.g., food service manager, student group, principal)? How do they decide which items are selected for sale in these locations?

**What's Happening at School?**



**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion





## Ideas for Parents

You can be involved in your child's school by **attending** meetings, workshops, or training events offered by the school; **communicating** with school staff and other parents; **volunteering** for school events or in your child's classroom; **reinforcing** healthy messages and practices your child learns at school; **helping** make decisions about health in the school; and **being part** of community activities supported by the school. Here are some specific ideas for how you can support your child's school in providing Smart Snacks.

- Next time you're in school, take a look at the variety of foods available in vending machines, snack bars, and school stores.
- Learn about what your child's school is already doing. Ask the school cafeteria manager how often fruits and vegetables are available as a la carte options for students.
- Volunteer to help conduct taste tests of healthier snack and beverage options.
- Join the school or district committee (e.g., wellness committee) that sets the policies for health and wellness, and work to include language about foods sold outside of the school meals program.<sup>4,5</sup>
- Learn about the **USDA Smart Snacks in School rule**.



Check out additional resources for parents related to the school nutrition environment and services, physical education and physical activity, and managing chronic health conditions at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/P4HS.htm>.

## REFERENCES

1. Institute of Medicine. *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth*. Washington, DC: Institute of Medicine of the National Academies; 2007.
2. Fox MK, Condon E, Crepinsek MK, et al. *School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study IV, Vol. I: School Foodservice Operations, School Environments, and Meals Offered and Served*. Alexandria, VA: US Dept of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis; 2012.
3. National school lunch program and school breakfast program: nutrition standards for all foods sold in school as required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, 7 CFR Section 210 and 220.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health*. Atlanta: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2012.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School health guidelines to promote healthy eating and physical activity. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2011;60(RR05):1-76.

