



Continuing to advance efforts to offer students healthier snack options in schools

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Companies have introduced nutritionally improved snack foods that meet Smart Snacks school nutrition standards. These standards apply to foods and beverages sold to children and teens in schools, outside of the school meals program. However, companies continue to advertise less nutritious snack foods directly to children and teens on TV and in other media.

The research

Snack FACTS examines the nutritional quality and advertising for 90 snack food brands offered by 43 companies that were marketed to U.S. children and teens on TV, internet, and in schools in 2014. Researchers analyzed healthier snacks, including yogurt, fruit, and nuts, as well as unhealthy snacks, including sweet and savory snacks such as cookies, chips, and fruit snacks, comparing 2010 and 2014 when possible. The report also compares advertised products to products offered as Smart Snacks in schools by the same brands and companies.

Findings

- The majority of advertised yogurt products qualify as healthy according to Smart Snacks standards.
- However, sweet and savory snacks represent the highest proportion of Smart Snacks products offered for sale in schools by brands that also advertise to children and teens on TV.
 - Some brands offer nutritionally improved products in schools (e.g., Baked Lays or Baked Tostitos), but only advertise their less nutritious versions on TV (regular Lays Potato Chips and Tostitos).
 - Other brands offer nutritionally improved versions of products only in schools, but with similar packaging as the less healthy versions sold in stores (e.g., reduced fat Cheetos, whole grain PopTarts).
- Smart Snacks tend to be nutritionally superior to advertised versions of sweet and savory snack brands, but many are not products that children should be encouraged to consume regularly as part of a healthy diet (e.g., Quaker Breakfast Cookies [15 g of sugar and 4.5 g of fat], Sunshine Cheez-It Whole Grain crackers [3.5 g of fat], or Keebler Elf Grahams [8 g of sugar and 4 g of fat]).

Some brands have developed nutritionally improved versions of products that are only available for sale in schools. Also known as “look-alike” or “copycat” products, similar packaging makes them difficult to distinguish from less healthy versions sold in stores.

Recommendations

Companies should further improve the nutritional quality of Smart Snacks sold to children and teens in schools – and school food advocates should demand improvements.

- Schools should encourage companies to continue to develop and offer Smart Snacks that exceed minimum nutrition requirements.
- Companies should not concentrate their in-school offerings on somewhat healthier versions of heavily advertised brands of unhealthy sweet and savory snacks, including cookies, snack bars, fruit snacks, chips, and crackers.

- In particular, look-alike versions of unhealthy brands that are not available outside of schools at all should not be sold to children in schools.
- Alternatively, companies could agree to sell and advertise only the healthier versions of their snack food brands outside of schools, if they also offer them for sale to students in schools.

Look-alike products

Nutritionally improved Smart Snacks sold in schools

Advertised snacks sold in stores



Can you tell the difference?

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The full report, *Snack FACTS 2015: Evaluating snack food nutrition and marketing to youth*, is available at uconnruddcenter.org/snackfacts