

OBESITY FACTS: SNACKS IN ALASKA SCHOOLS

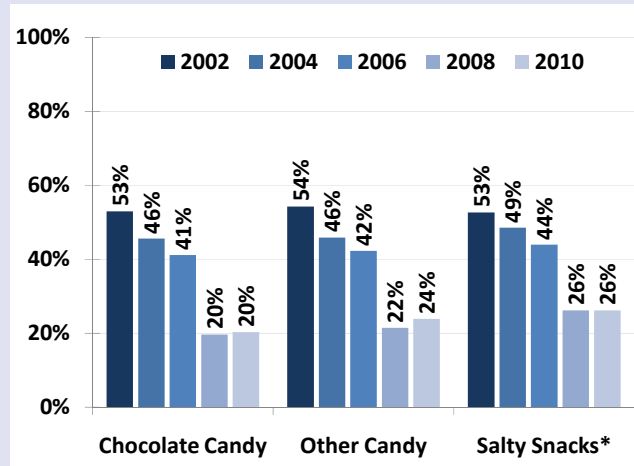
WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT AVAILABILITY OF SNACKS IN ALASKA SCHOOLS?

- Competitive foods and beverages sold in schools are not subject to federal¹ or state school meal nutrition standards.
- School environments that promote consumption of less nutritious foods and beverages are associated with:
 - Poorer student diets, and
 - Higher student weight status.²
- More than 1 in 4 of Alaska high school students are overweight or obese.³
- Childhood overweight and obesity are related to a number of poor health outcomes **during childhood**, including Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.⁴
- Obese children are also more likely to **become obese adults**, who are at increased risk of a number of poor health conditions, including premature death.⁴

COMPETITIVE FOODS are those available at school but outside of the national school lunch program. This includes foods and beverages sold in vending machines, school stores, or a la carte sections of the school cafeteria. If competitive foods are available, the Institute of Medicine recommends they consist of fruits, vegetables, whole grains products, and low-fat and non-fat dairy.⁵

SNACK FOOD AVAILABILITY IN ALASKA

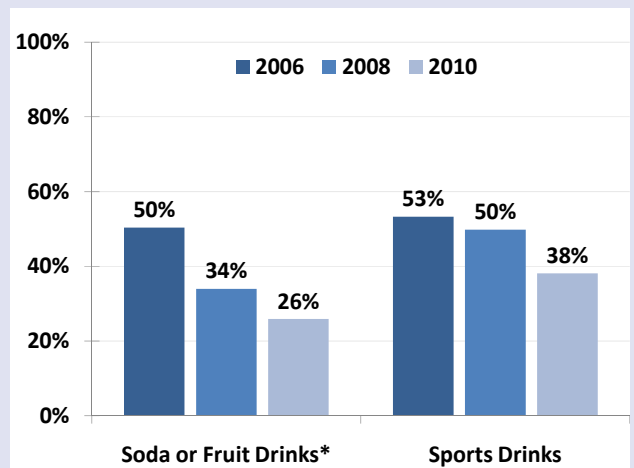
TREND IN PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS IN WHICH STUDENTS COULD PURCHASE CANDY OR SALTY SNACKS, ALASKA SECONDARY SCHOOLS, 2002-2010



SOURCE: CDC SCHOOL HEALTH PROFILES; *EXCLUDES LOW FAT

- There were significant declines over the 8-year period in the availability of each type of snack food in Alaska secondary schools.

TREND IN PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS IN WHICH STUDENTS COULD PURCHASE SODA OR SPORTS DRINKS, ALASKA SECONDARY SCHOOLS, 2006--2010



SOURCE: CDC SCHOOL HEALTH PROFILES; *EXCLUDES 100% FRUIT JUICE

- Declines in availability of soda or “fruit drinks” and sports drinks were significant from 2006 to 2010.

Overall, encouraging progress is being made in Alaska's school nutrition environment:

- The largest declines were seen between 2006 and 2008, directly following the Alaska's School Wellness Policy Initiative⁶ and the release of the Alaska Model School Wellness Policy.⁷
- The percentage of schools selling salty, high-fat snacks—such as potato chips—was cut in half between 2002 and 2010.
- The availability of candy via vending machines and other in-school sources was cut by more than half over this same period.
- In 4 years, the availability of soda and “fruit drinks” that were not 100% fruit juice was also cut in half; availability of sports drinks dropped nearly 30%.

SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICIES are school-based physical activity and nutrition policies created to reduce childhood obesity.

Despite this impressive progress, significant challenges remain:

- Sports drinks are still available in 1 in 3 secondary schools.
- Snack foods or beverages are still accessible in half of Alaska's secondary schools (data not shown).

What Can Alaskan Schools, Worksites & Communities Do?

- Maintain an active school wellness council, and evaluate the implementation of school wellness policies and make evidence-based improvements.⁸
- Increase availability and affordability of healthier food and beverage choices; restrict availability of less healthy foods and beverages; institute smaller portion size options; limit advertisement of less healthy foods and beverages; provide incentives for the production, distribution and procurement of foods from local farms⁹ and fisheries.

What Can Health Care Providers Do?

- Participate in school-based wellness councils to provide medical expertise in the development of program and policies to address childhood obesity prevention in schools.
- Advocate for childhood obesity prevention efforts and policies that promote good nutrition and physical activity.

What Can Individuals Do?

- Become familiar with your school's local wellness policy and explore ways to get involved and support your school's programs, practices and policies.

References

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