

Obesity Facts

Snacks in Alaska Schools

WHAT ARE SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICIES?

- **School Wellness Policies** are school-based physical activity and nutrition policies created to help children grow up at a **healthy weight**.
- **School Wellness Policies** are **required** for all districts participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs.
- **In 2014**, the USDA **Smart Snacks in School** nutrition standards¹ expanded to ensure **“competitive foods”**—snacks and beverages sold in vending machines, school stores, snack carts, à la carte lines and fundraising during the school day—are nutritious and promote health.

WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT AVAILABILITY OF SNACKS IN ALASKA SCHOOLS?

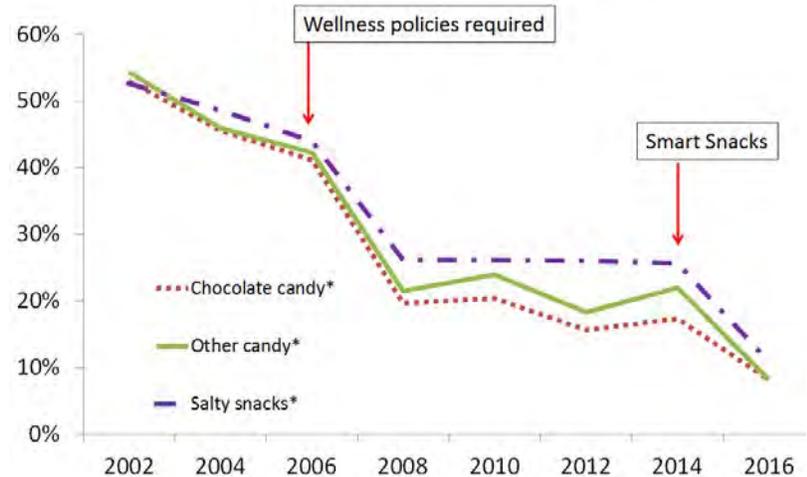
- School environments that promote consumption of less nutritious foods and beverages are associated with the following:
 - Poorer student diets and
 - Higher student weights.²
- About **1 in 3** Alaska high school students is overweight or obese.³
- Obese youth are at increased risk of prediabetes.⁴
- Excess weight or obesity in children is related to poor health outcomes **during childhood**, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.⁵
- Obese children are more likely to **become obese adults**, who are more at risk for adult health problems, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and early death.⁵
- In addition to suffering from physical health problems, obese children may also experience social stigmatization, discrimination and psychological problems.⁵

REFERENCES

1. Description of U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Smart Snacks in School standards available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday>.
2. Fox MK, Dodd AH, Wilson A, Gleason PM. Association between school food environment and practices and body mass index of US public school children. J Am Diet Assoc 2009;109(2 suppl):S108-17.
3. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2015 Highlights. Available at: http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Documents/yrbs/2015YRBS_Highlights.pdf.
4. Li C, Ford ES, Zhao G, Mokdad AH. Prevalence of pre-diabetes and its association with clustering of cardiometabolic risk factors and hyperinsulinemia among US adolescents: NHANES 2005–2006. Diabetes Care 2009;32:342–347.
5. U.S. DHHS. The Surgeon General’s Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, Jan 2010
6. State of Alaska Gold Standard School Wellness Policy. Available at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/SchoolHealth/aswpi.aspx>

SNACK FOOD AVAILABILITY IN ALASKA SCHOOLS

Percentage of Schools in which Students Can Purchase Candy or Salty Snacks, 2002-2016



Source: CDC School Health Profiles; Principals survey; * $p < .05$ trend

The School Health Profiles is a survey sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and conducted by the State of Alaska every even year. Middle and high school principals and health teachers complete the survey to assess the status of health and wellness-related policies, procedures, and instruction within their schools.

THE IMPACT OF POLICY IN ALASKA

- **The first big decline** in the availability of junk food in Alaska schools **occurred in 2008**. The percentages of schools selling candy, chocolate, and salty snacks were **cut in half** compared to their 2002 levels **directly following a federal requirement that all schools adopt a wellness policy**.
- In 2016, the percentages of schools selling each of three types of junk foods were **cut in half again**, directly after the publishing of the **Smart Snacks nutrition standards** and the update of the **Alaska Gold Standard School Wellness Policy**.⁶
- There were significant declines in all three categories of snack foods from 2002 to 2008, 2014 to 2016, and 2002 to 2016.

Be A School Wellness Champion



We are making progress in Alaska's school nutrition environment, but we still need your help to make our schools healthier!

Children spend most of their day at school. So, it's important that they have healthy foods and drinks while they are there. Good nutrition and physical activity also help kids learn better. A school wellness policy tells how your school is making the healthy choice, the easy choice for kids. Parents and community members can help update the school wellness policy and to put it into action.

4 ways you can help:

1 Join your school wellness committee. Each school district should have a wellness team to make nutrition and physical activity goals. Districts must allow parents and community members to participate. You do not need any special training to be on the committee, just an interest in keeping your school healthy!

2 Find your district wellness policy at <https://education.alaska.gov/tls/cnp/wellness.html>. Compare it to the Alaska Gold Standard School Wellness policy found at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/SchoolHealth/aswpi.aspx>

3 Support classroom and school events to have healthy foods and get kids physically active. Keep the wellness policy in mind when planning what foods and beverages to have at events and celebrations.

4 Support healthy fundraising. Use the Smart Snacks Product Calculator to ensure that foods and beverages sold in schools meet Smart Snacks standards. www.healthiergeneration.org/productcalculator

What is in your school wellness policy?

All districts participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs are required to have a local wellness policy. Major topics in the policy are:

-  **Nutrition education and promotion**
-  **Physical activity and Physical Education**
-  **Other wellness activities** (such as school gardens and walk/bike to school)
-  **Nutrition standards** for all foods and drinks **sold** at school (aka Smart Snacks)
-  Foods and drinks that may be **given** to students (such as at classroom celebrations or rewards for behavior)
-  **Food and beverage marketing**

We look forward to working with you to ensure our schools continue to be healthy places that support growth and learning. For more information, contact Lauren Kelsey at: lauren.kelsey@alaska.gov

