



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### Eating Well at School

*Trends in Competitive Foods and Beverages Available for Purchase in Secondary Schools—Selected States, United States, 2002–2008*

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

School is more than a place to learn. It's also a setting where students consume many of their meals. Food served in school cafeterias is already regulated by federal law, but food purchased outside the cafeteria is not.

Dr. Nancy Brener is a researcher with CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of maintaining a healthy diet at school. Welcome to the show, Nancy.

[Dr. Brener] Thanks.

[Dr. Gaynes] Nancy, why is food consumption at school even a concern?

[Dr. Brener] Well, schools are really a key setting for influencing the food choices that children make. Studies have shown that schools in which students eat less nutritious foods or have those foods available to them tend to have poorer diets and are also more likely to be obese. And as you know, we have a big obesity epidemic and the more things we can do to help combat that, the better.

[Dr. Gaynes] What steps have schools taken to address the nutritional quality of food that's available outside the school cafeteria?

[Dr. Brener] Well, typically, food that's available outside the school cafeteria is sold in vending machines or at school stores, canteens, or snack bars. So, states can set nutritional standards on these foods so that less nutritious foods are not available, such as candy, salty snacks, sodas, and sports drinks.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are some states handling this better than others?

[Dr. Brener] Yes. We've seen great progress in some states, like Mississippi and Tennessee. They've made great improvements in eliminating the availability of less nutritious foods and beverages. Other states, like Connecticut, Hawaii, and Maine, also have very few schools that sell these items. Yet, there are some states, like Utah, that have a long way to go. The majority of their schools do sell these less nutritious foods and beverages.

[Dr. Gaynes] Nancy, what kinds of foods or beverages would you recommend to students to consume during their school day?

[Dr. Brener] When students have the opportunity to eat and drink at school, this is a great time for them to get plenty of servings of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat and non-fat dairy products. And these are the types of items that we would like for schools to make available in the vending machines, school stores, and snack bars.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about school nutrition?

[Dr. Brener] They can go to [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth) - that's all one word. And at that web site, you can find out how *your* state is doing.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Nancy. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Nancy Brener about the importance of maintaining a healthy diet at school.

Remember, it's not just the cafeteria food that matters. Parents – work with your school officials to ensure that all the food available to students is nutritious. Maintaining good eating habits makes for a healthy body and can create a more positive learning environment.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

*[Announcer]* For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.