



Is health and wellness a priority at your school? (Check answers on page 4.)

**1** Has your school adopted and implemented a wellness policy?

**2** Does your local school wellness policy include nutrition guidelines for all foods available on campus?

**3** Do the nutrition guidelines apply to foods sold during the school day only or extend to include events occurring after school hours?

**4** Does your local wellness policy restrict marketing of food on the school campus?

**5** Are your school staff role models of good nutrition and physical activity behaviors?

# What Schools Can Do to Promote Healthy Eating

**O**besese and overweight youth are a health concern.

One-third of American youth (35 percent of males and 32 percent of females age 2 to 19 years) are either obese or overweight according to the 2007 American Medical Association (AMA) expert committee on childhood obesity. (See “Overweight Kids—What communities can do,” PM 1884 and “Guide to Healthy Kids—What parents can do,” NCR 374.)

Several factors influence children’s weight. One is food choices—what and how much is eaten. Another is decreased physical activity. The environment in which children live influences, and in some cases determines, food choices and physical activity behaviors.

**School environments help shape 95 percent of American children’s health behaviors.**

Students get 20 to 50 percent of their calories at school. Food choices, including vending and a la carte programs, frequently offer items that are high in calories and low in nutrients—thus encouraging habits that contribute to overweight.

Other foods—such as those offered in fundraising, reward and incentive programs, and parties—often include high-calorie, low-nutrient foods. Their presence creates an environment with mixed messages. Students need the opportunity not only to learn but also to practice healthy eating behaviors at school.

**Schools can create a healthy nutrition environment.**

The federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires all local education agencies to establish nutrition guidelines for all food sold “... during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing obesity.” Contact your local school to learn more about the guidelines.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has established voluntary guidelines to help schools identify and provide more appropriate food and beverage options for their students and staff. These standards

- promote consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nonfat or low-fat dairy products;
- limit the amount of saturated fat, salt, added sugars, and total calories;
- apply to a la carte cafeteria items, vending machines, school stores, other food and drink available outside of school meal programs, school or classroom celebrations or parties, and fundraising functions;
- do not apply to federally reimbursed school meals which must meet existing guidelines;
- do not apply to personal bagged lunches or snacks that children bring to school for themselves.

The IOM guidelines establish two levels of food choices: Tier 1 foods are available to all students at all times; Tier 2 foods are available only to high school students after school hours.

# What you should know about the Institute of Medicine (IOM) standards

## These items meet Tier I standards

- Whole or sliced fruits (apples or pear slices; fruit cups packed in juice or water; fruit skewers)
- Vegetables (baby carrots, jicama sticks, green or red pepper strips, pea pods, vegetable skewers)
- Dried or dehydrated fruit (raisins, apricots, cherries, and bananas)
- 100% fruit juice or 100% low-sodium vegetable juice
- Low-fat, low-sodium whole-grain crackers or chips
- Whole-grain, low-sugar cereals
- 100% whole-grain mini bagels
- 8 ounce servings of low-fat, fruit-flavored yogurt with less than 30 grams sugar (yogurt tubes; fruit and yogurt parfaits)
- Low-sodium, whole-grain bars (cereal or granola) containing sunflower seeds, almonds, or walnuts (the fat content in the nuts and seeds is an allowed exception to the report's standard on fat)
- Plain water without flavoring, additives, or carbonation
- Skim or 1% milk\*\*
  - 8 ounce servings of lowfat or nonfat chocolate or strawberry milk with no more than 22 grams of sugar (the naturally occurring small amount of caffeine in chocolate milk is an allowed exception to the report's caffeine standard)
- Soy beverages (calcium-fortified preferred)
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice (4-ounce limit for elementary and middle schools; 8-ounce limit for high schools)



Nuts and seeds are allowed as combination products as long as other nutrient standards are met and do not count against the total fat content of the product.

When information about **added sugars** is available, the standard is no more than 25 percent of calories from added sugar.

### Additional information

about combination foods and a la carte entrée items is available at the IOM Web site:

[www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx](http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx)

\*These are suggested as voluntary standards. The Institute of Medicine was established in 1970 under the charter of the National Academy of Sciences to provide independent, objective, evidence-based advice to policymakers, health professionals, the private sector, and the public.

\*\*Non-nutritive sweeteners are only allowed as Tier 2 foods (e.g., sodas, flavored drinks, and milk). Non-nutritive sweeteners cannot be used in flavored milk to meet the Tier I standards.

## Tier 1 foods

- Items are available to all students during after-school activities that are school-sponsored.
- Each item must provide one serving of fruit, vegetable, whole grain, or nonfat or low-fat dairy.
- Each item can provide no more than 200 calories per portion as packaged.
- Each item must provide (per portion)
  - no more than 35% of total calories from fat
  - less than 10% of total calories from saturated fat
  - no more than 0.5 gram trans fat (per serving)
  - no more than 35% calories from total sugars with no more than 30 grams of total sugar
  - no more than 200 mg sodium per portion

## Tier 2 foods

- Items are available **ONLY** to high schools.
- Items do **NOT** necessarily provide a serving of fruit, vegetable, whole grain, or low-fat or nonfat dairy.
- Items are limited to 200 calories or less per portion.
- Items **MUST** meet same nutrition standards as Tier 1 foods.

## Evaluate foods for fat, sugar, and sodium according to Tier 1 and 2 standards

Use the following chart when checking the nutrition facts for packaged beverages.

Calories	Fat Limit <sup>1</sup>	Sugar Limit <sup>2</sup>	Sodium Limit <sup>3</sup>
50	2 grams	4 grams	10 mg
100	4	9	20
150	6	13	30
200	8	18	40

<sup>1</sup> No more than 35% of total calories from fat  
<sup>2</sup> No more than 35% calories from total sugars  
<sup>3</sup> No more than 200 mg sodium per portion as packaged

# Institute of Medicine Nutrition Standards\*

## and beverages

during the regular school day and involve students.

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on as packaged)

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 erving)  
 ugars (except for yogurt)  
 ugars per 8-ounce portion as packaged  
 on as packaged

### A “serving of whole grain” product

- contains a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) health claim for whole grains;
- has a standard of identity for a whole grain (e.g., 100% whole wheat);
- contains whole grain as the primary ingredient by weight (first ingredient in the ingredient list); OR
- simply is a whole grain, such as brown rice, oatmeal, or popcorn.



### These items meet Tier 2 standards

- Low-sodium baked potato chips, crackers, and pretzels 
- Animal crackers with no more than 35% of calories from sugar
- Graham crackers with no more than 35% of calories from sugar
- Ice cream bars low in sugar and fat 
- Caffeine-free, calorie-free, non-fortified soft drinks 
- Seltzer water
- Non-nutritive sweetened, non-caffeinated, non-fortified (vitamin or mineral) beverages with less than 5 calories per portion as packaged\*\*
- Sport drinks available only to students engaged in an hour or more of vigorous athletic activity at the discretion of coaches

## and beverages

chool students and ONLY after

a serving of fruit, vegetable, whole

r less per portion as packaged.

standards as Tier 1.

## and sodium limits standards

Nutrition Facts labels on foods and

Sugar Limit <sup>2</sup>	Sodium Limit <sup>3</sup>
grams	200 milligrams
	200
	200
	200

packaged

### Popular foods that may not meet Tier 2 standards

Several typically offered vending and snack choices do not meet the Tier 2 standards. The list below summarizes those products and suggests which nutrients may be provided in excessive amounts. Use chart at left when checking labels

Food Item	Check these nutrients
Potato chips, pretzels, cheese crackers	Fat and sodium
Breakfast or granola bars	Fat and sugar
Ice cream products	Fat and sugar
Cheese and cheese products	Fat and sodium
Muffins	Fat and sugar
Jerkins	Fat and sodium
Snack mixes (i.e. Chex® Mix, Gardetto's®)	Fat and sodium
Cookies	Fat and sugar
Soft drinks	Calories and caffeine
Fruit drinks, punches, -ades, and -ales	Calories and sugar
Energy drinks	Calories, sugar, and fortification with vitamins, minerals or botanicals



### **Visual clues also influence students' food and beverage perceptions and consumption.**

What we see has significant influence on our behaviors. Vending machines, corporate ads or logos, classroom rewards/parties, as well as the actions of school staff and peers all affect youth behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity.

The IOM report recommends

- placing Tier 2 foods and beverages in low student traffic areas.
- removing marketing messages from vending machines, and
- applying the nutrition standards to after-school and community events that include adults—such as athletic events and PTA meetings.

Schools also may want to consider implementing non-food alternatives to fundraising efforts and classroom rewards. To learn more about non-food choices, see “*Non-food Alternatives for School Rewards and Fundraising*,” Pm 2039A.

### **School staff are vital role models for healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors for our youth.**

Teaching by example is as important as teaching by the book. School staff who choose to follow the same recommendations as they give to their students make that message doubly powerful.

### **Quiz Answers**

1. Yes—Great! Your school is on track for creating a healthier school environment.

No—Federal legislation required schools to adopt a local wellness policy by the first day of school following June 30, 2006. School administrators and school board members need to make health/wellness a priority for your school.

2. Yes—Great! Nutrition guidelines for all foods on campus are an important part of creating a school environment that supports good nutrition.

No—Federal legislation requires schools to have nutrition guidelines as a component of their local wellness policy.

3. All events—Great! Your school is promoting health/wellness not only to students/staff during the school day but also to the community during after-school/evening programs and events.

School day only—The Institute of Medicine encourages applying nutrition guidelines for all school/community events.

4. Yes—Great! Your school recognizes that nutrition and physical activity messages are an important part of school health/wellness.

No—The Institute of Medicine recommends restricting food marketing in schools (sales, scoreboards with corporate logos or ads, Channel One, ads on buses, school equipment, and books).

5. Yes—Great! Your school staff recognize their role as influential role models in encouraging healthy food and beverage choices.

No—The perceived “double standard” discourages total commitment to wellness.

### **For more information, visit the following Web sites:**

*Action for Healthy Kids*  
[www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources.php](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources.php)

*Institute of Medicine Nutrition Standards*  
[www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx](http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx)

*Iowa State University Extension Nutrition Resources*  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition/)

*Iowa State University Extension Publications*  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store)

*MyPyramid.gov*

*Quick and Easy Guide to School Wellness*  
[healthyschoolscampaign.org/campaign/wellness/index.php](http://healthyschoolscampaign.org/campaign/wellness/index.php)

*Team Nutrition*  
[teamnutrition.usda.gov/healthy-schools.html](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/healthy-schools.html)

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