
Associated Press

N.J. to Ban Junk Food From Schools

September 23, 2004

<<<>>>

Retrieved 09/29/04 from
<http://www.wnbc.com/education/3756280/detail.html>

TRENTON, N.J. -- Soda, many kinds of candy and fatty snacks like chips would no longer be sold at New Jersey schools under a proposal announced Thursday by Gov. James E. McGreevey.

The proposed changes to school nutrition rules are part of an effort to combat childhood obesity, which is more common in New Jersey than nationally. A new study shows one in five of New Jersey's children are obese and an additional 20 percent are overweight.

Only snacks that have less than eight grams of fat could be served or sold to students under the new rules. They would prohibit the sale of items that list sugar as the first ingredient and also limit the serving size of sugary beverages.

"Over the years, soda and junk food have become all too readily accessible in our schools where parents have very little control over what their kids eat," McGreevey said.

The standards will apply to items sold in vending machines, cafeteria lines, snack bars, school stores and fund-raisers.

School districts will have until September 2007 to meet the nutrition standards. Each district is required to develop its own nutrition policy by 2006.

The state Board of Agriculture voted Wednesday to have the new rules published in the New Jersey Register in November. All proposed changes to administration rules must appear in the register and are open to a 60-day comment period, after which they could then automatically go into effect.

A state Department of Health and Senior Services study released Thursday shows that New Jersey's childhood obesity rate is higher than national rates. A recent study for the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found 15 percent of children and teens are obese.

Children who are overweight are at risk for physical problems such as diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol and high blood pressure, and mental health problems such as depression and low self-esteem, said Health Commissioner Clifton R. Lacy.

In addition to the food rules, the governor also announced the GetFitNJ challenge, which encourages kids and adults to participate in some type of regular physical activity.

The challenge requires children under 18 to get 60 minutes of exercise five days a six consecutive weeks. Adults must get 30 minutes of exercise five days a week for six consecutive weeks.

Participants may track their progress online at www.nj.gov/getfitnj. Those who complete the challenge will receive a certificate in recognition of their achievement.

"By providing healthier food choices and encouraging physical activity, we can help kids establish healthy eating habits to last a lifetime," McGreevey said.