

Improvements in School Nutrition Have Positive Influence on Youth Eating Behaviors

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(PhysOrg.com) -- When schools serve healthier, more nutritious food, students do not compensate by eating more unhealthy food at home, a new Yale University study has found. In addition, the study shows that this type of school-based obesity prevention does not lead to weight concerns or body dissatisfaction among students. These findings refute arguments against the proliferation of programs to improve school nutrition, say the researchers. The study appears in the December issue of *Health, Education & Behavior*.

The study involved six middle schools in Connecticut. Three schools replaced snacks and beverages that did not meet the state's Healthy [Food](#) Certification guidelines, which impose limits on sugar, fat, calories and portion sizes for all foods sold a la carte, in vending machines, at

fundraisers and in school stores. The three other schools made no systematic changes.

[Students](#) were surveyed about dietary intake and weight concerns before and after the intervention programs began. Researchers assessed the frequency with which students ate a range of beverages and snacks at home and at school for the year prior to the intervention, and then at the end of the year of the intervention.

The study found that students in schools that removed unhealthy foods and beverages did not increase their consumption of those foods at home when compared to students in the schools with no changes.

“These data refute the concern that removing unhealthy beverages and foods from schools will result in overeating these foods at home,” said Marlene Schwartz, Ph.D., deputy director of the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale. “Some may think that ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder,’ but our data tell us that when it comes to sweetened beverages and unhealthy snack foods, a more apt phrase is ‘out of sight, out of mind.’”

Changing the school food environment also did not exacerbate problems of body and weight dissatisfaction. “When a [school](#) system sells only healthy foods and [beverages](#),” Schwartz explained, “the message to students and parents is that good nutrition is important for everyone and schools have an important role to play in setting a high standard for how to feed children well.”

Provided by Yale University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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