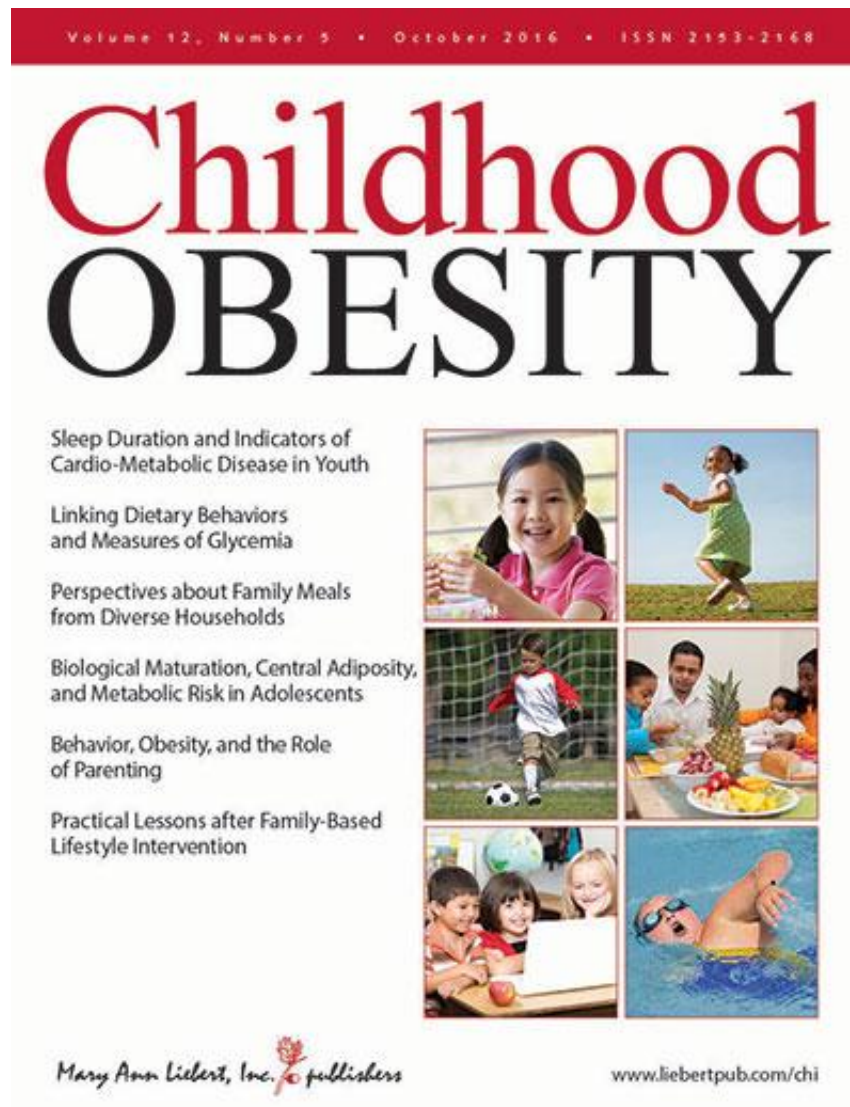


Look-alike smart snacks: Are they benefiting student nutrition or brand marketing?

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When Smart Snacks sold in schools—reformulated versions of less nutritious snacks sold in stores—are packaged to look like their commercial counterparts, consumer confusion is likely, compromising dietary health gains and affecting perceptions about both brands and schools, according to an article in *Childhood Obesity*.

Jennifer Harris, PhD, MBA and Marlene Schwartz, PhD, University of Connecticut, Hartford, and Maia Hyary, MPA, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, examine these issues in the article entitled "Effects of Offering Look-Alike Products as Smart Snacks in Schools". The researchers compared how students and parents rated look-alike Smart Snacks and store versions of the same snacks based on taste, healthfulness, and intent to purchase. The finding that most of the study participants wrongly believed that they had seen Smart Snacks sold in stores demonstrated consumer confusion. The authors caution that the look-alike Smart Snacks available in schools could lead people to believe that the same brands sold in stores meet similar nutritional standards.

"This important study highlights the confusion students and parents experience when viewing nutritionally different versions of similar food items marketed in schools versus in stores," says *Childhood Obesity* Editor-in-Chief Tom Baranowski, PhD, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX. "The fact that students rated the healthier versions of the snacks as equal in taste to the unhealthy versions is an important milestone for [healthy snacks](#). Hopefully this article will lead to a national discussion about what types of foods parents, students, and citizens in general want offered in schools."

More information: Jennifer L. Harris et al, Effects of Offering Look-Alike Products as Smart Snacks in Schools, *Childhood Obesity* (2016). [DOI: 10.1089/chi.2016.0080](https://doi.org/10.1089/chi.2016.0080)

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