

Is juice on school menus a problem?

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(HealthDay)—When given the option, students in school meal programs are more likely to choose fruit juice over more nutritious whole fruit or milk, a new study finds.

"This is a problem because compared to [juice](#), milk and whole fruit are better sources of three nutrients of concern for adolescents—calcium, vitamin D and fiber," study co-author Marlene Schwartz said in a University of Connecticut news release.

Schwartz is director of the UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.

The researchers analyzed cafeteria register data from three low-income, Northeast high schools over one [school](#) year. When juice was available to students in the National School Lunch program, almost 10 percent fewer milks were chosen and about 7 percent less whole fruit.

The researchers also looked at a la carte sales of beverages, and found that 8 percent fewer bottles of water and 24 percent fewer bottles of 100 percent juice were sold when juice was offered.

"The potential nutritional impact of these substitutions is important to consider," said lead author Rebecca Boehm.

"For instance, an 8-ounce serving of apple juice has no vitamin D, 285 fewer grams of calcium, and 116 fewer grams of potassium compared to an 8-ounce serving of 1 percent milk," said Boehm, a postdoctoral fellow at UConn.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children aged 7 to 18 consume no more than 8 ounces of juice a day.

The National School Lunch program reaches over 30 million students. Juice is allowed only on certain days.

The study was published recently in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [nutrition](#).

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