



## School ban on soda sales wins approval

IN an effort to curb the rising incidence of childhood obesity, many consumer groups are focusing efforts on banning sodas from school vending machines. This effort has not gone unnoticed. The American Beverage Association recently approved restrictions reducing sodas in elementary, middle and high school vending machines. Specifics can be found at [www.ameribev.org](http://www.ameribev.org).

**Question:** Why did the association promote such restrictions?

**Answer:** The association states, "The school vending policy is intended to promote healthy lifestyles for children by partnering with parents, community leaders and school officials to provide beverage choices that are tailored by grade level." Obviously this action helps soften community calls for regulation of soft drinks in schools.

Because many soft-drink manufacturers also produce calorie-free and caffeine-free versions of their beverages, along with fruit juices and drinks, bottled water, sports drinks and even dairy drinks, it is likely that children will still be buying their beverages, and profits are not likely to decrease.

**Q:** Will this policy help to reverse obesity?

**A:** Reversing the upward trend in fat gain in youth requires much more than just limiting sodas in vending machines. Many fruit juices contain as much sugar as sodas, and although they also contain more nutrients, too much fruit juice also can lead to excess weight gain.

A stroll through any supermarket shows that significant space is dedicated to other high-calorie foods with low nutritional value, including chips,

cookies, candies and other snack foods. And we shouldn't forget the growing aisle of sweetened cereals, yogurts and other calorie-dense foods that add significant sugar calories in the processing.

**Q:** What can parents do to help avoid excess calories in a child's diet?

**A:** Two suggestions:

» Always have fruit easily accessible to provide children with nutrients and phytochemicals that will help with long-term health. Make it more of an effort to grab a cookie than an apple.

» Always have a pitcher of water in the refrigerator, along with bottled water for those on the run.

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