# Sugary Snacks: Should junk food be sold in schools?

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Nutrition experts have long urged schools to cut down on the amount of sugary and fattening foods they have available on campus. Now the American government is flexing its muscles regarding the junk food ban.

There's a food fight going on, and it involves the government, schools and students. A law was proposed in February 2010 to ban sugary drinks and other junk foods from schools. But many argue that removing vending machines and fatty foods from schools may do little to impact growing obesity rates among the country's youth and may only fuel students to "smuggle" in foods of their choice.

There is also concern over the foods that are the staples of school fundraisers. Candy bars, cookies, holiday treats -- all of these items are frequently sold to raise money for athletic teams and other extracurricular clubs. Will the junk food ban extend to restricting chocolate bar sales for clubs?

Part of the legislature is a result of the First Lady's pledge to make tackling childhood obesity her mission. Michelle Obama stated that "importance has to be placed on this issue as it is affecting many students across the country."

According to the Centre for Disease Control, childhood obesity has tripled in the last 30 years. A combination of increased caloric intake and sedentary lifestyles has led many children to be classified as overweight or obese. As of 2008, 19.6 percent of children ages 6 to 11 were and 18.1 percent of adolescents 12 to 19 fell into this category.

Obesity puts individuals at risk for many health ailments. Increased risk for cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol and high blood pressure are some concerns. Cancer, type 2 diabetes and joint problems are also an increased risk for overweight kids.

Many schools have already taken on individual initiatives to reduce unhealthy foods in schools and beef up the offerings of healthy alternatives. A federal push in schools could see an overhaul of school breakfast and lunch programs that would mean additional money spent by school districts that are already tapped for funds. Healthier foods tend to cost more to buy and produce.

Some detractors argue that a ban will not alleviate the problems. Students who cannot buy junk food at school will simply bring it with them from home or indulge after school hours. Perhaps more education on healthy eating, including showing students that healthier alternatives can still be tasty, is a better route to putting a dent in obesity numbers.

Plus, it's up to parents and caregivers to do their part, say health experts. If the message for healthy eating does not extend beyond school property, kids are less likely to get the message. Therefore, healthy foods will have to be a part of home life as well.