



Removing Chocolate Milk from School Cafeterias Positively Impacts Student Population Nutrition

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BACKGROUND: School Policy Removes Chocolate Milk at Lunch

- During the 2017-18 school year, the San Francisco Unified School District implemented a policy removing chocolate milk from school lunches as part of a district-wide strategy to reduce students' intake of added sugars.
- The District provided training and technical assistance to schools to enhance the likelihood that students would accept the policy change and substitute plain milk among students otherwise selecting chocolate milk.

We studied the impact of this policy on students' intake of milk and its associated nutrients.

- Researchers at the University of California collected data on students' milk selection and consumption in 24 middle and high schools during one lunch period at each school each study year.
- The study included 3,158 students in 2016 before the policy and 2,966 students after the policy was implemented in 2018.
- Students in study schools were primarily Asian or Latinx, and most qualified for free or reduced price meals.



Read the full research study online:
<http://bit.ly/NPIPDMilkPolicy>

KEY FINDINGS: After chocolate milk was removed, milk taking at lunch declined, but average per-student intake of key nutrients from milk did not.

- Fewer students took milk with school lunch (90% took milk at baseline of which 52% was chocolate; 76% took milk at follow-up).
- Milk waste did not change (37% of milk was wasted at baseline, 39% at follow-up).
- Across the study population, the relatively small decline in milk consumption did not lead to a significant reduction in average per-student intake of calcium, vitamin D, or protein from milk.

Intake of added sugars from milk declined significantly

- Average per-student intake of added sugars from milk declined significantly, by 3 grams (almost 1 teaspoon) per student. This decline is 12% of the maximum amount of added sugars recommended for children by the American Heart Association (25 grams).



Removing chocolate milk from school cafeterias may improve student nutrition.

- Sugar sweetened beverages, including chocolate milk, are the leading source of added sugars in youths' diets.
- Reducing consumption of sugary drinks is associated with improving health and reducing risk of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, dental caries, and obesity.
- This study found that when a school district removed chocolate milk from middle and high school cafeterias, most students continued to select milk with lunch, drinking plain, unsweetened milk instead of flavored milk with sugar.
- Since plain and flavored milk have the same nutrient profile for calcium, vitamin D, and protein, the small decline in milk consumption did not significantly impact intake of these nutrients, across the study population. Since plain milk has no added sugars, eliminating sweetened milk led to a significant decline in intake of added sugars from milk across the study population.
- The benefits to students in reduced sugar intake appeared to outweigh the risk presented to the study population from a reduction in key nutrients from milk.

Policy Recommendation: Schools should consider eliminating chocolate milk to help reduce students' added-sugar intakes.



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