

Alliance Competitive (Snack) Foods Guidelines Update

Q & A

What are the Alliance Competitive (Snack) Foods Guidelines?

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation developed its Competitive (Snack) Foods Guidelines to help students make healthier food choices in the school environment. The guidelines cover foods offered outside of the reimbursable meal program such as products sold in school vending machines, a la carte lines, snack bars, fundraisers, and school stores. In October 2006, five of the nation's leading food manufacturers joined with the Alliance to support these guidelines. To date, over 20 companies have adopted or endorsed the Alliance Competitive (Snack) Foods Guidelines and are actively promoting healthier products to schools across the country.

What changes are being made to these guidelines?

The recent update reflects the Alliance's ongoing evaluation of the guidelines and how they are being implemented in schools across the country. The following changes have been made to the guidelines:

- **Exempting the nuts, nut butters, and seeds category from the $\leq 10\%$ saturated fat requirement.** Currently, there are no available peanut butter products that meet the saturated fat requirements of our guidelines (less than 10% of calories). The Alliance Competitive Foods Guidelines never intended to exclude peanut butter in the school food environment. By lifting the saturated fat requirement in the nut, nut butters, and seeds category, peanut butter will become compliant, provided they meet the calorie limitations outlined per grade level.
- **Adding a 0g fat requirement to dried and packaged fruit.** Currently dried fruits with no added sweeteners are compliant with our guidelines as long as they meet calorie limits per grade level. In the case of dried fruit, a limitation around added fat was needed, as well. In many dried fruit varieties, a minimal amount of oil is added to prevent sticking; however, the total fat remains listed at 0g on the Nutrition Facts Panel. Adding a 0g fat requirement as labeled allows a trace amount of oil to serve a functional purpose, but the oil does not add enough fat to be recorded on the label.
- **Providing more guidance for dried fruit/nut combination products.** The Alliance Competitive Foods Guidelines currently allow dried fruit with no added sweeteners and nuts/seeds as individual products provided they each meet calorie limits per grade level. A dried fruit and nut combination (trail mix) product is unable to meet the 35-10-35 requirements due to total fat from the nuts. The recent change to the guidelines allows a combination product as long as it strictly combines the two Alliance compliant products: dried fruit with no added sweeteners and nuts/seeds exempt from total fat.

Why did the Alliance decide to adjust the guidelines?

The Alliance guidelines were developed to provide age-appropriate nutrition guidelines in order to improve students' access to healthier foods and beverages. The guidelines also take into account the market availability of products that meet these guidelines to ensure schools can effectively implement these standards. While nuts, nut butters and seeds are high in fat, the types of fat found in these foods are healthy fats when eaten in moderation. These foods are also a source of fiber, vitamin E and other nutrients. Allowing peanut butter and dried fruit/nut combination products will offer schools a balanced choice of products to implement the guidelines.