

With so many families needing better access to healthy foods, is a solution just around the corner?

A nearby, well-stocked grocery store is something many of us take for granted. But for 29.7 million Americans who live in food desertsⁱ—areas where it is difficult to buy fresh food—just getting to the grocery store can be a constant struggle. Across the country, low-income zip codes have 25 percent fewer chain supermarkets compared to middle-income zip codes.ⁱⁱ The result? Children and families must rely heavily on their neighborhood corner or convenience stores for food purchases, which often may not offer fresh produce, low-fat dairy, lean meats and other healthy foods. That can lead to a greater risk of obesity and diabetes.^{iii, iv, v} For our youngest generations, the consequences are too great. Among children today—one in three of whom are either overweight or obese—we’re seeing a range of preventable health problems that previously weren’t seen until adulthood, such as high blood pressure, elevated blood cholesterol and type 2 diabetes.^{vi, vii}

We can help improve the food options for millions of Americans by learning the facts and taking action:

- There’s a greater prevalence of corner stores in low-income and high-minority urban communities, and food purchases from these stores may contribute to higher energy intake and consumption of less healthy foods and beverages by urban school children.^{viii}
- Small food stores commonly sell highly processed foods that are high in fat and low in nutrients.^{ix}
- Small food stores or convenience stores also tend to charge higher prices for their food as compared to grocery stores and supermarkets.^x
- More than 40% of elementary school students in one study shopped at a corner store twice a day, often purchasing chips, candy and soda.^{xi}

But what if these stores weren’t contributing to the nation’s obesity epidemic? What if, instead, these stores were part of the solution? What if access to healthy, affordable food was **just around the corner**?

Healthy corner store initiatives can make better food options more accessible in communities across the country:

- Programs that put marketing materials such as shelf labels and signs can help consumers spot healthy options, and providing equipment such as additional shelving and refrigeration can help sell fresh fruits and vegetables.^{xii, xiii}
- In fact, the amount of shelf space dedicated to fruits and vegetables at neighborhood food stores is positively associated with greater consumption of fruits and vegetables among residents nearby.^{xiv, xv}

We must help our state's families get better access to healthy choices like fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, whole grains, seafood and lean meats.^{xvi} Healthy corner stores can make the difference.

DID YOU KNOW: From 2010-2012, Philadelphia’s Healthy Corner Store Network successfully converted 100 local corner stores, which each introduced an average of 44 healthy food products.^{xvii}

SOURCES

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