

The National Movement to Improve Restaurant Children's Meals

National organizations including the American Heart Association,¹ American Cancer Society,² Center for Science in the Public Interest, Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility,³ and MomsRising⁴ are encouraging improvements to restaurant children's meals at the local, state, and national level. Although leading restaurant companies and local jurisdictions have made some progress in recent years, much more is needed.

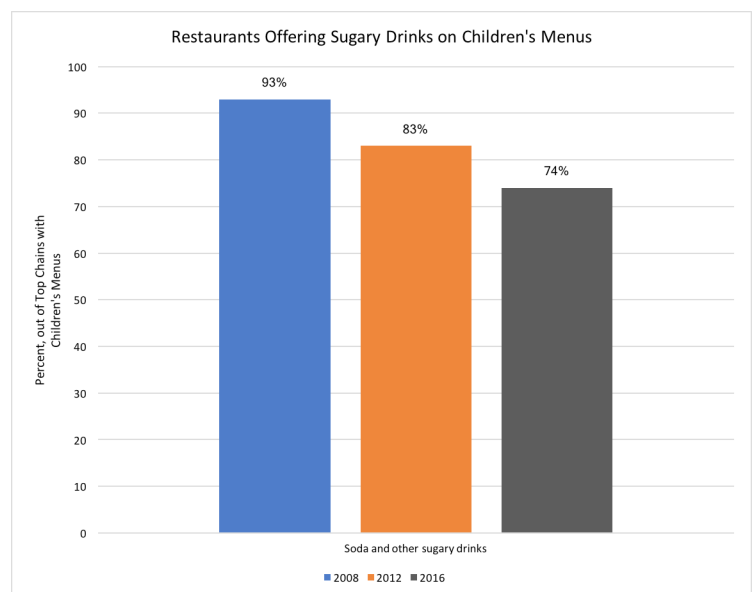
Many of the biggest restaurants nationwide are improving their children's menus.

In 2013, McDonald's became the first major restaurant chain to agree to stop listing sugary beverages on its children's menus.⁵ Since then, Burger King, Wendy's, Dairy Queen, Applebee's, and Jack in the Box have made similar commitments, responding to public health concerns that sugary beverage consumption adversely affects children's health.⁶

As a result, fewer restaurants had sugary beverages—soda, lemonade, and fruit punch—on their children's menus in 2016 than in 2012 and 2008. However, the majority of top chains (74%) still have sugary drinks on children's menus.⁷ Public health organizations are encouraging Chili's,⁸ Bojangles' (a regional chain popular in the southeast),⁹ and other major restaurant chains¹⁰ to stop using their children's menus to push sales of sugary drinks.

Some restaurants are also improving the nutritional quality of the foods they offer. McDonald's and Walt Disney theme parks have changed the default sides that come with their children's meals. Over the first 12 years that it has served apples in Happy Meals, McDonald's served 2 billion packages of apples.¹¹ Disney's healthy defaults resulted in 21 percent fewer calories compared to meals with unhealthy side dish and beverage defaults.¹²

Nationwide, more than 100 companies participate in the National Restaurant Association's Kids LiveWell program, which is designed to encourage healthy options on restaurant children's menus.¹³ Participating restaurants offer one meal combination and one side dish that provide a positive contribution to children's nutrition (by including a fruit or vegetable, for example) and are moderate in calories, saturated fat, and sodium.¹⁴ However, among the 50 largest restaurants nationwide, the proportion of children's meals that are healthy only rose from 1 percent to 3 percent from 2008 to 2012.¹⁵



Communities across the nation are championing healthy restaurant children's meal policies.

Five cities in California have passed ordinances to improve the nutritional quality of restaurant children's meals. The cities of Davis, Stockton, and Perris require that restaurants in their jurisdictions offer only healthier beverages as the defaults that come with children's meals.¹⁶ All three ordinances passed by unanimous vote,¹⁷ with the support of city officials and residents.¹⁸ Additionally, San Francisco and Santa Clara County have laws that set nutrition standards for restaurant children's meals that are sold with toys.¹⁹

As of March 2017, healthy kids' meal bills are pending before the Vermont²⁰ and New York²¹ state legislatures and the New York City Council.²² Additional kids' meal bills are expected in localities in California, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, and Maryland.

Technical assistance is available to communities that would like to implement restaurant children's meal policies. ***For more information, please contact the Center for Science in the Public Interest at nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org.***

¹ American Heart Association Voices for Healthy Kids. *Community*. <http://voicesforhealthykids.org/community/>.

² American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. *Improve Nutrition in Kid's Restaurant Meals*. <https://www.acscan.org/improve-nutrition-kids-restaurant-meals>.

³ Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, MomsRising, Center for Science in the Public Interest. *Wendy's Removes Soda from Kids' Meals*. <https://www.momsrising.org/page/moms/wendys-removes-soda-from-kids-meals>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Center for Science in the Public Interest and Voices for Healthy Kids' Action Center. *Six Down, Many to Go*. Available at http://www.foodmarketing.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/six_down_many_to_go_print_version.pdf.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Ribakove S, Almy J, Wootan MG. *Soda on the Menu: Improvements Seen but More Change Needed for Beverages on Restaurant Children's Menus* (in press). Available at http://www.foodmarketing.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/six_down_many_to_go_print_version.pdf.

⁸ Center for Science in the Public Interest. *Ask Chili's to Drop Sugary Drinks*. <http://action.cspinet.org/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1927&ea.campaign.id=59892>.

⁹ Center for Science in the Public Interest. *Improve Bojangles' Kids' Meals*. <http://action.cspinet.org/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1927&ea.campaign.id=46480>.

¹⁰ Center for Science in the Public Interest. *Please Urge Restaurants to Take Soda Off the Kids' Menu*. <http://action.cspinet.org/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1927&ea.campaign.id=41163>.

¹¹ McDonald's. "What Happens When You Take Something Good for Kids and Make It Fun? Billions of Things!" May 18, 2016. Available at <http://news.mcdonalds.com/US/news-stories/2016/What-happens-when-you-take-something-good-for-kids>.

¹² Peters J, Beck J, Lande J, Pan Z, Cardel M, Ayoob K, Hill J. "Using Healthy Defaults in Walt Disney World Restaurants to Improve Nutrition." *The Behavioral Science of Eating* 2016, vol. 1, pp. 92-103.

¹³ National Restaurant Association. *Kids LiveWell Program*. Available at <http://www.restaurant.org/Industry-Impact/Food-Healthy-Living/Kids-LiveWell-Program>.

¹⁴ Kids LiveWell requires that kids' meals (entrée, side, and beverage) contain two or more food groups and have no more than 600 calories, 35% of calories from total fat, 10% of calories from saturated fat, 0.5 grams artificial trans fat, 35% of calories from total sugars, and 770 mg of sodium. The program also has standards for side dishes.

¹⁵ Batada A, Wootan MG. *Kids' Meals II: Obesity and Poor Nutrition on the Menu*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Science in the Public Interest, March 2013. Available at <https://cspinet.org/new/pdf/cspi-kids-meals-2013.pdf>.

¹⁶ Davis Municipal Code ch. 17, art. 17.02 (2015); Stockton Municipal Code ch. 5.70 (2016); Perris Ordinance 1340 (2017) (to be codified as Chapter 7.46).

¹⁷ Davis City Council, Meeting Minutes for June 2, 2015, <http://documents.cityofdavis.org/Media/Default/Documents/PDF/CityCouncil/CouncilMeetings/Minutes/2015/Minutes-2015-06-02-City-Council-Meeting.pdf>; Stockton City Council, Meeting Minutes for June 7, 2016, http://stockton.granicus.com/MinutesViewer.php?view_id=48&clip_id=5632; Perris City Council, Recorded Meeting of March 15, 2017, http://perris.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=4&clip_id=1204.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Voices for Healthy Kids Action Center, *Stockton, CA Passes "Healthy-by-Default" Kids' Meal Beverage Ordinance* June 16, 2016, <https://www.voicesactioncenter.org/Inside-Track-June-17-16-c> (quoting Stockton Vice Mayor Christina Fugazi); Veronica Rocha, "City of Davis Sours on Sweet Drinks for Kids' Meals in Restaurants," *Los Angeles Times* November 14, 2015. Accessed at <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-in-davis-sweet-drinks-kids-meals-20150528-story.html>.

¹⁹ San Francisco Health Code art. 8 §§ 471.1-417.9 (2010); Santa Clara County Ordinance Code ch. 22, §§ A18-350-A18-355 (2010).

²⁰ Vermont Gen. Assembly, S.70, H.264 (2017).

²¹ N.Y. S.1074, A.3375 (2017).

²² N.Y.C. Council Intro. 0442-2014 (2014).