Evaluation of a Shift to Healthier Concessions at a Youth Basketball Tournament

Why are healthier concessions important?

- In Minnesota, about one in four 9th grade boys and one in five 9th grade girls are overweight or obese.¹
- Obesity in childhood increases one's risk for heart disease and metabolic, digestive, respiratory, skeletal and psychosocial disorders.²
- Youth who participate in sport are just as likely to be overweight or obese as youth who do not participate in sport.³
- Compared to non-participants, kids who participate in sport:
  - Consume more calories overall
  - Are more likely to eat at fast-food restaurants
  - Are more likely to drink sugar-sweetened beverages
- Sports drinks are standard offerings at concessions.
  - A standard size bottle of Gatorade (32 fl oz) contains about 13 teaspoons of sugar.
  - The percentage of youth consuming sports drinks is increasing and they are drinking more of it than previously.⁴
  - Sports drinks are heavily marketed towards youth athletes.⁴
- Unhealthy food and drinks are everywhere in youth sport settings. Below is a typical concession menu.

How were our concessions healthier than previous years?

- **Healthier drink options**
  - Options included low-calorie sports drinks, zero-calorie vitamin-enhanced water, flavored milk

- **Healthier snack options**
  - Options included fruit, baked chips and pretzels, nuts and trail mix, string cheese, fruit smoothies
  - Only one candy option was available compared to eight at the 2012 tournament.

What did we find?

- **Sports drinks are frequently purchased for youth.**
  - Many adults purchased sports drinks for their children at this tournament.
  - Adults think their children need to “replenish” after physical activity.

- **Tournament attendees want healthy options.**
  - Most participants think it is very or somewhat important that youth sporting events offer healthy food options to children.
  - Most participants limit their child’s purchases based on the health of the item at least sometimes.

- **Tournament attendees were pleased with the changes to the concessions but thought more could be done to improve the health of the concessions.**
  - Most participants thought our concessions were somewhat healthier than “typical” concessions.
  - Participants were pleased with the healthier options offered at this tournament, but also wanted healthier meal options like sandwiches.

- **Tournament attendees do not support explicit policies banning candy or soda.**
  - Participants were glad about the limited candy options available at the tournament; however, most participants oppose a policy banning the sale of candy at concessions.
  - Most participants also oppose a ban on soda at concessions. It appears adults oppose this because they purchase it for themselves. One participant stated, “You can police a kid, but don’t police adults.”

What should be done to further improve the health of the concessions?

- Eliminate sugary sports drinks from concessions at youth sporting events.
- Educate parents, coaches and youth that water is a healthy and adequate source of hydration.
- Offer healthier meal options like sandwiches.

Research conducted by: Alicia Leizinger, Master’s Degree Student in Community Health Promotion
Research Advisory Committee: Toben F. Nelson ScD, M. Susie Nanney PhD, Robert Jeffery, PhD
School of Public Health; Division of Epidemiology and Community Health

Acknowledgements: We are grateful for the support of the Roseville Youth Basketball Association.