

Chips and fizzy drinks still a weighty matter for kids

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WHILE researchers revealed last week that the number of overweight children in South Africa had almost doubled in the past decade, a new study of what kids buy at their school tuck shops showed that, despite being offered healthy choices, they would still rather buy chips and fizzy drinks.

The aim of this study, which was conducted for Nestle in June, was to discover the attitudes and behaviours around primary school tuckshop usage, to obtain a clear understanding of what children in primary schools are eating, the food they have access to, and the factors that influence the food options that are offered to them in school tuck shops.

"The results revealed that the majority of children are consuming fizzy, fattening, fun and frivolous food at school – not good news when you consider that they spend a big portion of their day there and that nutrient deficiencies can lead to health problems later in life," says Nestlé South Africa nutrition, health and wellness manager Naazneen Khan.

Cindi Bester, a Port Elizabeth mom, agreed. "The kids love the sweets and chocs and chips. When we are out of stock they get quite



WHAT'S FOR LUNCH? A recent study reveals that South African children still predominantly purchase fattening foods from school tuckshops

disappointed. I think parents should pack health food in the kids' lunch boxes. If they are prepared to give cash for tuck shop, then I guess they are giving tuck shops the right to supply unhealthy treats," Bester said.

A sample of 20 primary schools – both private and public – were used for the study and 652 mothers were interviewed.

According to the study, tuck shop bestsellers were fizzy drinks and chips. Toasted sandwiches also sold well, with 55% of tuck shops claiming this was a bestseller (hot dogs and cheese

sandwiches were most popular, followed by chicken mayonnaise sarmies).

Other popular purchases are:

- Pies;
- Fizzy cooldrinks;
- Hot chocolate
- Frozen yoghurt

According to Khan, only 5% of tuck shop operators believed the pupils ate healthily and 30% agreed that they ate far too much junk food.

"Only 30% of the tuck shops surveyed sell fresh fruit, despite it being requested, and only 28% sell fresh milk," Khan said.