



UCONN
RUDD CENTER
FOR FOOD POLICY & OBESITY

“Look-alike” Smart Snacks in schools study

Sally Mancini
Director of Advocacy Resources
9/13/15

Look-alike Smart Snacks
sold in schools

Regular versions
sold in stores







Can you
tell the
difference?

Background

- Copycat or look-alike Smart Snacks—issue raised by public health advocates and parents after USDA Smart Snack standards went into effect in 2014
- Cara Wilking, Public Health Advocacy Institute
- Brief analysis in 2015 Snack FACTS report

Differences between Smart Snacks look-alike products and advertised products

	Advertised products	Smart Snacks
Sunshine Cheez-It Whole Grain (Mondelez)		
Serving size	 30 g	 21 g
Calories-per-serving	150 kcal	100 kcal
Fat-per-serving	8 g	3.5 g
Saturated fat-per-serving	2 g	1 g
Protein-per-serving	2 g	3 g
NPI score	36	48
Cheetos (PepsiCo)		
Serving size	 28 g	 20 g
Calories-per-serving	150 kcal	90 kcal
Fat-per-serving	10 g	3.5 g
Saturated fat-per-serving	1.5 g	0 g
Sugar-per-serving	1.0 g	0.5 g
Sodium-per-serving	300 mg	135 mg
NPI score	30	50

The study: online experiment

School 1: Look-alike Smart Snacks



School 2: Regular unhealthy snacks



School 3: Repackaged Smart Snacks



School 4: Healthy brands



Key findings

Selling look-alike Smart Snacks in schools confuses students and parents. It also allows junk food brands to promote their products to students in schools.

- Students believed that look-alike Smart Snacks and the less-nutritious versions of the brands sold in stores were similar in healthfulness and expected them to taste the same.
- Parents and students reported that they had seen four out of five of the look-alike Smart Snacks in stores, even though they are not widely available outside of schools.
- Students believed that they could still purchase the majority of the less-nutritious versions of these brands in their schools.

Key findings cont.

The snacks sold in schools *matter*: selling look-alike snacks undermines schools' ability to teach good nutrition.

- Both parents and students believed that schools selling look-alike Smart Snacks were less concerned about students' health and well-being than schools that only offered clearly more-nutritious snacks, including Smart Snacks in different packaging and only healthy brands.

Putting Research into Action

- Increase the availability of nutritious Smart Snacks such as nuts, fruit, and yogurt in schools
- School districts can strengthen local wellness policies to include a more stringent marketing standard that eliminates the marketing of look-alike or copycat Smart Snacks products
- Call on food manufacturers to also offer Smart Snacks versions of their products for sale outside of schools and package these products to clearly differentiate them from less-nutritious versions of their brands



SCHOOL BUS

10
Bags



5
Bags



5
Bags



5
Bags



5
Bags



SMART SNACKS MIX

**MEETS USDA
STANDARDS FOR
K-12 SCHOOLS**

THANK YOU!

Harris JL, Hyary M, Schwartz MB (2016). Effects of Offering “look-alike” products as Smart Snacks in schools. *Childhood Obesity*.
www.UConnRuddCenter.org/LookAlikeSmartSnacks

Please visit us at uconnruddcenter.org



facebook.com/UConnRuddCenter



@UConnRuddCenter



UConn
RUDD CENTER
FOR FOOD POLICY & OBESITY