Smart Moves

California kids see results from having healthier food choices at school. Here's why you may want to follow their lead.

September 5, 2012 By Janna Leyde

A little more than 10 years ago, the Golden State cracked down and banned soft drinks in grade schools. Later, the state said no to sodas in high schools and raised nutrition standards across the board. Why? Because childhood obesity in America has tripled during the past 30 years and, according to the CDC, one in three low-income children are considered obese before age 5.

Since then, study findings show that California kids consume 160 fewer calories each day than their peers in other states. What's more, University of Illinois researchers found that if kids cut 100 to 200 junk-food calories from their diets each day, they can avoid long-term weight gain and related health problems such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

But if your state lacks Cali schools' standards, it's up to you to take action. Start children on a healthy eating path with these three tips from Lisa Brown and Jennifer Medina, registered dieticians at New York City's Brown and Medina Nutrition.

1. Cultivate your kids' appetite for healthy eats. To acquire a taste for new foods, children need more than 10 exposures.

2. Lead by example. You eat healthy too.

3. Get kids involved. Allow them to contribute in the kitchen.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/healthy-school-lunches-22904-6772