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HEALTHY YOUTH SPORTS SNACKS CAN BE “FUN BITES”



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While the kids have fun playing youth sports in competitive leagues, the rest of the family is sometimes heading to the event directly after work or school without eating a healthy dinner first.

Finding food choices lower in fat, sodium and sugar at the concession stand may be a challenge for those who have made the choice to eat healthfully.

The Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas) aims to change how youth-sports concessions serve those families through its “**Fun Bites**” initiative. DOH-Pinellas is working with youth concession stands to offer more choices without taking away other familiar concession foods and snacks. The initiative is supported by the agency’s federal anti-obesity Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) grant.

Youth concession stands can take part in the Fun Bites initiative by working with PICH staff to add healthy menu items that give customers a choice. Nutritionist-approved items that include baked chips, fruit, yogurt, grilled chicken sandwiches and bottled water can be offered in addition to familiar menu items such as hot dogs and ice cream. Fun Bites are identified with initiative’s orange slice logo to make them easy to spot. Families can then select those items on menu boards without needing to check calorie, sodium or fat counts on the packages or guessing that an item is nutritious.

Youth concession stands in the City of Largo, the City of St. Petersburg and Countryside Little League in north Pinellas were among the first to use Fun Bites on their menus. When youth sports leagues sign up to be Fun Bites locations, they receive marketing materials and assistance along with signage and technical assistance on selecting healthy menu items. There is no cost to be a Fun Bites location.

For information on becoming a Fun Bites location, email Megan Carmichael at Megan.Carmichael@FLHealth.gov.

For information about DOH-Pinellas, go to www.PinellasHealth.com.

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