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Doctors Fight Soft Drinks

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Soft drinks should be eliminated from schools to help tackle the nation's obesity epidemic and pediatricians should work with their local schools to ensure that children are offered healthful alternatives, the American Academy of Pediatrics says.

In a new policy statement in the January issue of Pediatrics, published today, the academy says doctors should contact superintendents and school board members and "emphasize the notion that every school in every district shares a responsibility for the nutritional health of its students."

While some schools rely on funds from vending machines to pay for activities, the new policy says elementary and high schools should avoid such contracts and that those with contracts should impose restrictions to avoid promoting overconsumption by kids.

About 15 percent of Americans ages 6 to 19 are seriously overweight. That is nearly 9 million people and triple the number in a similar assessment from 1980.

The National Soft Drink Association, which represents most soft-drink makers nationwide, said the new policy is misguided and goes too far.