
The Seattle Post-Intelligencer

French remove junk food vending machines

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PARIS -- Soda and junk food vending machines are getting kicked out of French schools as part of a broad public health bill passed by parliament Friday to combat rising obesity among youths.

The ban on vending machines will take effect for the school term beginning September 2005.

Sweetened alcoholic beverages, which are popular among youths, will get hit with a still-to-be decided but "dissuasive" tax as part of the new law, lawmakers said. France's legal drinking age is 16.

Snack food and soft drink manufacturers, meanwhile, will have the option of including health warnings on televised advertisements or paying a tax that amounts to 1.5 percent of their ad budget.

The tax is projected to reap \$15.7 million a year, with the money going to a national health institute that will handle awareness campaigns on healthy eating.

French youths are getting steadily plumper, with between 16 percent and 19 percent considered obese.