



COUNTY OF MONTEREY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Elsa Jimenez, Director of Health

Administration
Behavioral Health

Clinic Services
Emergency Medical Services
Environmental Health/Animal Services

Public Health
Public Administrator/Public Guardian

March 8, 2017

CONTACT:

Karen Smith

Public Information Officer

831-755-4639 (Office)

831-504-8606 (Cell)



New Survey Reveals Monterey County Kids Still Bombarded with Tobacco and Alcohol Ads

Just released findings from statewide survey shows disparity in availability of healthy and unhealthy products

Salinas, CA – March 8, 2017 – New research shows that in Monterey County, 79% of stores near schools have unhealthy store front ads. Healthy ads on all stores declined from 14% in 2013 to 4% in the most recent survey. These findings are part of new research released today on the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, condoms and healthy and unhealthy food options in California stores that sell tobacco.

In the “salad bowl of the world”, only 28% of stores have fresh fruits and vegetables. This is down significantly from 2013 when 46% of stores offered fresh fruits and vegetables.

Today, throughout California, health advocates held 13 press events to release results of the scientific survey, which is the largest its kind. It builds upon an initial research released three years ago in March 2014 and provides insights into changes in the availability and marketing of the studied products during this time. Information was collected in the summer of 2016 from more than 7,100 stores in all 58 California counties including pharmacies, supermarkets, delis, convenience and liquor stores as well as tobacco-only stores.

“Overall, the findings show a continuing and alarming discrepancy in our county in the accessibility and marketing between products that promote a healthy lifestyle, and those that don’t,” said Dr Edward Moreno, Health Officer for Monterey County “Stores play a critical role on our community’s health, and this survey shows offerings and messaging are out of balance, tipping heavily toward unhealthy options. Our goal is to help re-calibrate the balance toward health.”

The survey found the following for Monterey County:

- In addition to selling cigarettes, 76 % of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 28% of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables. What’s more, 89.5% of stores sold a popular brand of “little cigars” individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar.
- 18% of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, but nearly 78% sell alcohol.
- 68% of surveyed stores sell condoms, but only 26% sell them on unlocked shelves.

“The availability of condoms on unlocked shelves is of particular concern given the sharp increase in STDs we have seen in Monterey County,” said Dr. Moreno

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Another goal was to examine the accessibility and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth.

“This survey found that our community’s youth are inundated with unhealthy messages and choices. We need to change what information and options our kids are exposed to and work to surround them with healthy choices and messaging instead,” said Elsa Jimenez, Monterey County Director of Health

The survey found the following for Monterey County:

- Only 4% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 69% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. 79% of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products.
- More than 28% of stores place tobacco products or ads in kid-friendly locations, such as tobacco ads at ‘kid-level’ (three feet or below) or tobacco products near candy or toys.
- More than 38.5% of stores placed alcohol ads at “kid-level” or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.
- 78% of stores sell flavored non-cigarette tobacco products, which often have kid-appealing flavors, such as grape, watermelon, chocolate, gummy candies and even breakfast cereals. Similarly, 79% of stores near schools also sell flavored tobacco products.
- Good news, only 14% of the stores sold sugary sweetened beverages at the check-out.

“Monterey County Health Department is committed to continuing to work with local health advocates and partners to provide accurate information and help make the healthy choice the easy choice for all of our residents” said Jimenez.

Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community is a statewide campaign formed by tobacco prevention, nutrition, alcohol abuse prevention and STD prevention partners collaborating to improve the health of Californians by informing them about the impact of unhealthy product availability and marketing in the retail environment.

For state and county-specific data and more information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, please visit www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com.

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