



Twice as many stores in the Central Valley sell flavored cigarettes and alcohol than sell fresh fruits and vegetables. That's the finding of a new state health survey.

The Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community survey, released Wednesday, found that it's far easier to find tobacco or alcohol than it is to find fresh food, especially in low-income neighborhoods.

Fresno-based pediatrician Dr. Razia Sheik says in Fresno County, for example, just 39% of stores carried fresh fruits and vegetables.

"Compare this to 80% of retailers selling flavored tobacco products or alcohol. It is much easier in the Central Valley to access cherry crush e-cigarettes or watermelon pink alcopops than really watermelon, fresh watermelon and fresh cherries," Sheik says.

The survey focused on flavored tobacco, sweetened alcohol and bright, colorful advertising of those products, because health experts say they are designed to lure in children.

They say starting drinking or smoking at younger ages contributes to addiction, unhealthy lifestyles, and preventable death.

The Healthy Community survey did not make specific recommendations but did say citizens should use the information to pressure their community retailers to offer a better selection of food.

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