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Long Island School Food Survey

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Newsday hired registered dietitian Constance Brown-Riggs to analyze recipes and nutritional information from October 2007 menus from 47 schools in 10 Long Island school districts. The documents were obtained from districts through Freedom of Information requests made by Newsday. Newsday selected the districts — Brentwood, Herricks, Massapequa, North Shore, Rocky Point, Smithtown, Southampton, Westbury, West Hempstead and Wyandanch — to represent a cross-section of Long Island schools based on geography, size, percentage of free/reduced students, and other factors.

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Brown-Riggs, based in Massapequa, was referred to Newsday by the American Dietetic Association. She also has previous experience conducting nutritional analysis of school food on behalf of the State Education Department.

Her nutrient standards were based on current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and were age-appropriate for the grade levels evaluated. She entered recipe ingredients and nutritional information into a professional nutrition analysis software program to create a database. She noted that there were limitations to her analysis, such as no available information in some cases on portion sizes, brand names of products, specifics on condiments and whether fruits and vegetables were fresh, canned or frozen.

Every school in Brown-Riggs' study came in under the recommended levels for carbohydrates and cholesterol and exceeded recommended levels for fiber and protein. The vast majority also met standards for calcium, calories and vitamin C.

But the food generally was too high in fat and sodium, and Brown-Riggs said schools rely too heavily on processed meats.

**More than 97 percent of the schools served food with too much sodium; those schools exceeded guidelines by an average of 45 percent.

**More than 94 percent of the schools (18 of 19) for which levels could be determined served food containing trans fatty acids; the recommendation is zero.

**More than 38 percent of the schools served food with too much saturated fat; those



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schools exceeded levels by an average of more than 12 percent.

**More than 19 percent of the schools served food with too much fat; those schools exceeded levels by an average of 24 percent.

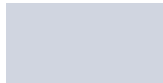
Nearly 32 percent of the schools served food too low in iron; those schools fell short of standards by nearly 14 percent.

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