

New York City Healthy Bodegas Initiative 2010 Report



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What Is the New York City Healthy Bodegas Initiative?

The New York City Health Department launched its Healthy Bodegas Initiative in 2006. The goal: to boost the availability of and demand for healthy foods in New York City neighborhoods with the highest rates of poverty and chronic disease.

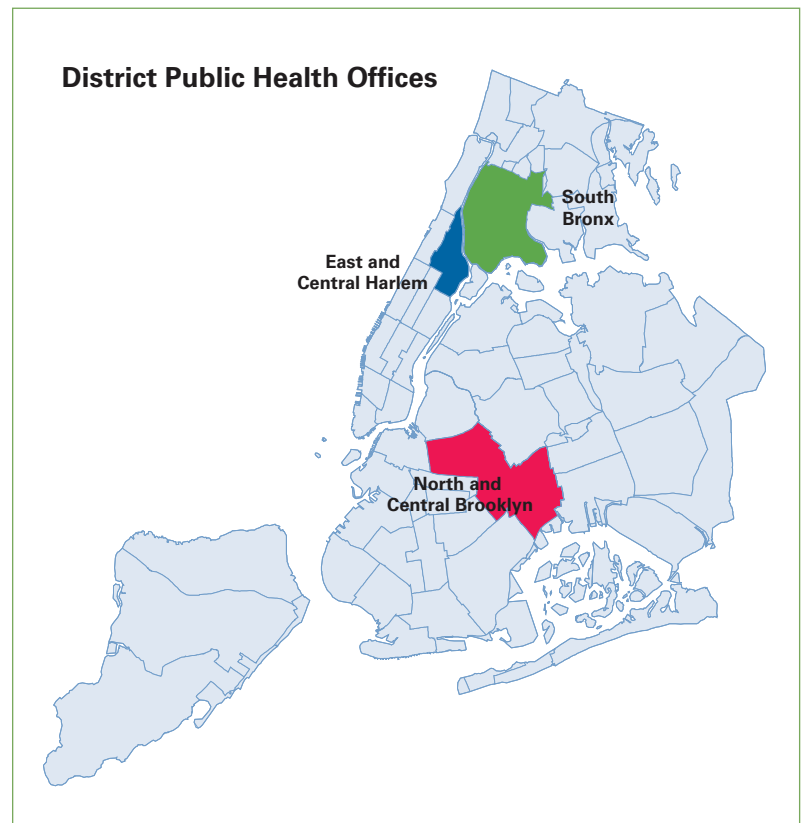
The Healthy Bodegas Initiative works with bodegas (small corner stores) in the city's underserved communities to stock and promote more healthful foods. It also works with community organizations and area residents to raise nutritional awareness and promote the purchase of healthier foods.

Target Neighborhoods

The initiative targets the three New York City neighborhoods where the Health Department maintains District Public Health Offices:

- South Bronx
- North and Central Brooklyn
- East and Central Harlem

These neighborhoods suffer from high rates of obesity and diabetes,¹ health problems associated with limited access to nutritious foods. While bodegas are widespread in these neighborhoods, they offer fewer healthy options than supermarkets.² In areas of Brooklyn, for instance, bodegas make up more than 80% of food stores, with only one in three selling low-fat milk, compared with nine in 10 supermarkets. Only one in four East Harlem bodegas sells apples, oranges and bananas. Leafy green vegetables are available in only 4% of the bodegas in East Harlem and 2% of those in Central Harlem.³



¹ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Community Health Survey, 2008. <http://nyc.gov/html/doh/html/survey/survey.shtml>: Accessed March 2, 2010.

² Graham R, Kaufman L, Novoa Z, Karpati A. *Eating In, Eating Out, Eating Well: Access to Healthy Food in North and Central Brooklyn*. New York, NY: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2006.

³ Gordon C, Ghai N, Purciel M, Talwalker A, Goodman A. *Eating Well in Harlem: How Available is Healthy Food?* New York, NY: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2007.

Store Selection

The Health Department defines a bodega as a food store that:

- Has no more than two cash registers
- Sells mostly food and doesn't specialize in any one item, such as candy or meat
- Sells milk

The initiative focuses on bodegas that:

- Are close to schools, Women, Infant and Children (WIC) centers, day care centers and other community sites
- Show interest in working with the initiative

Participating stores agree to:

- Stock and sell a variety of wholesome foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain products and low-fat and fat-free milk
- Display nutritious foods prominently in their store
- Label and promote healthful items

Activities

Mooove to 1% Milk

To kick off the Healthy Bodegas Initiative, the Health Department enlisted bodegas in Harlem, the South Bronx and North and Central Brooklyn to stock and actively promote 1% milk. The Mooove to 1% Milk campaign started with 15 bodegas and expanded to more than 1,000.

Participating bodegas agreed to carry more 1% milk, display posters promoting low-fat milk and distribute health information to customers.



During the campaign, Health Department staff paid several visits to each bodega: an initial visit to assess the store's supply of low-fat milk, distribute promotional materials and educate owners about the health benefits of 1% milk; and several follow-up visits to answer questions, monitor progress and help with any implementation challenges.

To help increase demand for low-fat milk, staff members also held nutrition workshops and low-fat milk taste tests at community organizations, health centers, schools and health fairs.

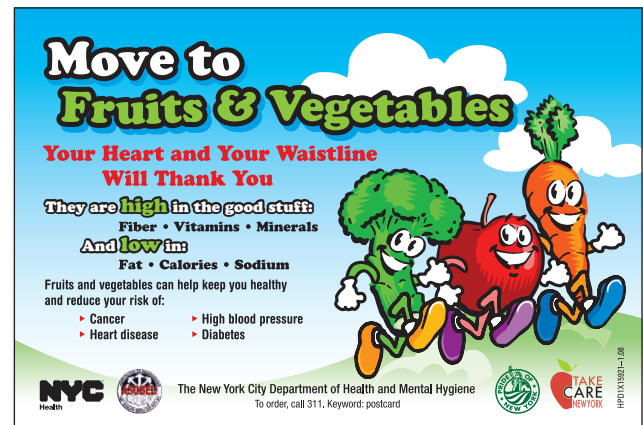
Results

- 21% of participating bodegas started carrying low-fat milk for the first time.
- 45% reported an increase in low-fat milk sales.
- 70% of stores reported an increase in demand for low-fat milk.

Move to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

During the Move to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables campaign, the Health Department worked with 520 bodegas in Harlem, the South Bronx and North and Central Brooklyn to increase the availability, quality and variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Health Department staff provided marketing materials, technical assistance and training, helping store owners improve layouts and food displays, and connecting them with local distributors, such as farmers' markets.



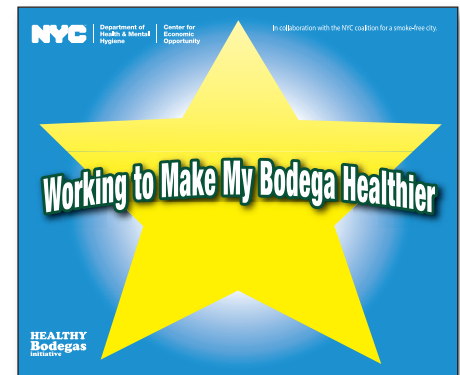
The Health Department also conducted outreach and education in local schools, day care centers and WIC centers to raise awareness about the campaign and promote healthy eating.

Results

- 53% of participating bodegas started stocking a wider variety of fruits and vegetables.
- 46% started carrying more fruits and vegetables.
- 32% of stores reported more customers bought fruit.
- 26% reported more customers bought vegetables.

Star Bodegas

In 2008, the Health Department built on lessons from the 1% milk campaign and the fruits and vegetables campaign to launch the Star Bodegas program. The program works with select bodegas – star bodegas – to offer and promote a range of nutritious foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat milk, low-calorie drinks, whole grain bread, low-sodium canned vegetables and soup, and unsweetened canned fruit or fruit canned in its own juice. Star bodegas are also encouraged to offer healthy breakfasts and lunches including fresh fruit and water or low-fat milk, as well as healthier snacks, such as unsalted nuts and low-fat yogurt.



To help bring people into the stores, familiarize them with new healthy foods and help customers understand how these foods can contribute to their health, Health Department staff partnered with a local non-profit to host cooking demonstrations and provide nutrition information to customers and people passing by. Staff also helped owners apply for licenses to sell fresh produce in front of stores.

Results

Among the initial 55 star bodegas:

- 95% of stores were offering low-sodium and reduced-sugar canned goods.
- 55% started carrying sandwiches that are more nutritious.
- 78% reported that more customers were buying healthier foods.

Adopt-a-Bodega

In addition to working with bodegas to make nutritious food more accessible, the Healthy Bodegas Initiative recognizes the importance of increasing customer demand for them. The Adopt-a-Bodega program works with community organizations and residents to develop a relationship with a participating bodega, and support it in stocking healthier foods. The program provides participating organizations with:

- Information about the lack of nutritious food in their neighborhood
- Assistance in reaching out to the adopted store
- Strategies for promoting the store within their organization and building relationships with other bodega owners
- Postcards and other materials that consumers can use to ask stores to stock their favorite healthy foods

For more information about adopting a bodega, visit nyc.gov/health/bodegas or email bodegas@health.nyc.gov.



Farm-to-Bodega

In 2008, the Health Department launched a pilot project linking participating bodegas with local farmers' markets, where fresh, high-quality produce is often available at low prices. Farm-to-Bodega stores were selected for their proximity to participating markets and their interest in participating.

The project received positive feedback from stores, with owners reporting that more people were buying the farm-fresh produce, and that it had a longer shelf life than other produce.

What We've Learned

- **Store owners stock what people buy.** Therefore, community buy-in and support are essential to help sustain healthy changes.
- **Healthy corner store initiatives require a variety of approaches that can be tailored to each store's readiness.** For example, a store that largely carries prepackaged foods and non-perishables may start by stocking low-sodium canned goods, while one that already offers some fresh produce may start by offering a broader variety of healthy foods, such as grab-and-go fruit salad.
- **Store owners often need training and technical support, as well as marketing materials and other forms of promotional support.** Examples include:
 - Assistance in connecting owners with local farmers and other suppliers of healthful foods
 - Information and training on how to purchase, price and store fresh produce
 - Assistance in improving store layout, shelf space and displays for healthful foods, such as placing healthy food in high-traffic areas and replacing makeshift cardboard boxes with new shelves to better showcase fresh produce
 - Advertising and promotional materials, such as shelf signs, posters, flyers and giveaways like reusable tote bags for customers who buy fresh produce
 - In-store cooking demonstrations and taste tests, or samples of healthful foods with nutritional information



On the Horizon

Going forward, the Healthy Bodegas Initiative plans to:

- Recruit additional star bodegas to help increase the availability of healthy foods in target neighborhoods
- Host additional cooking demonstrations at stores and community organizations to help improve sales and build community support
- Expand healthy food offerings, such as breakfast and lunch specials and snacks, in bodegas near schools
- Continue connecting owners with local farmers and other suppliers of healthy foods
- Help store owners identify and apply for low-interest loans, free energy savings assessments and other incentives to upgrade their stores

For more information about the New York City Healthy Bodegas Initiative, visit nyc.gov/health/bodegas, email bodegas@health.nyc.gov or call 311.



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