



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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Survey Finds Sharp Increase in Availability of E-Cigarettes in San Luis Obispo County

San Luis Obispo, CA – March 8, 2017 –New research shows that in San Luis Obispo County, the availability of e-cigarettes in local stores has grown almost 29% since 2013. “The expanded availability of e-cigarettes is of particular concern and reflects the spike in use by teens and young adults in the last three years,” said Dr. Penny Borenstein, Health Officer for the County. This finding is 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.

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. Borenstein. “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 San Luis Obispo County:

- In addition to selling cigarettes, 92% of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 60% of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables. What’s more, 64% of stores sold a popular brand of “little cigars” individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar.
- 28% of stores sell non- or low-fat milk, but nearly 83% sell alcohol.
- 81% of surveyed stores sell condoms, but only 61% sell them on unlocked shelves.

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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 Dr. Borenstein.

The survey also found the following for San Luis Obispo County:

- Only 14% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 67% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. 43% of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products.
- More than 36% 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.
- 94% 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, 71% of stores near schools also sell flavored tobacco products.

"San Luis Obispo County 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 Californians," added Dr. Borenstein.

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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