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New Guide Brings Snacking Help to Consumers

RALEIGH— Many of us make poor food choices when we turn to vending machines or snack bars in search of a quick bite to eat. Now there's a free guide to help busy consumers make better decisions when facing rows of colorful snacks and drinks.

The N.C. Division of Public Health and N.C. Cooperative Extension has announced the release of *Eat Smart North Carolina: Snacks and Drinks*, available online on the Eat Smart, Move More...NC consumer website at www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com.

"Calories from snacking can wreck someone's best intentions," said Carolyn Dunn, a nutrition specialist with Cooperative Extension and one of the co-authors. "We are trying to raise people's awareness that something as simple as the beverage you choose at a coffee shop can make a big difference in total calories eaten for a day."

The document outlines the need to make wise snack choices – choosing fruits and vegetables for snacks, for example, can help us meet our body's need for these vitamin-filled foods each day.

"Fruits and vegetables are low in calories but very high in vitamins and minerals," said Diane Beth, nutrition consultant with the N.C. Division of Public Health. "And if we fill up on these low-calorie foods, we are more likely to be at – and maintain – a healthier weight."

Studies show that Americans consume more calories now than they did two decades ago. Many of those extra calories come from sweet and salty snacks, soft drinks, and larger portions of many of the foods we buy and eat away from home, according to a study published in *Obesity Research* in 2002. Extra calories translate into extra weight.

Snacks and Drinks highlights some surprising facts, like how calories from drinks – that latte you have in the afternoon, or the sweet tea you grab from the drive-thru at midday – are "stealth" calories, meaning that your body doesn't realize it is getting all those calories. So, it's very easy to sip down hundreds or even thousands of extra calories from drinks and far exceed our daily calorie needs.

"In this guide, we show how making seemingly normal, everyday drink choices can add up to more than 1,300 calories in one day," said Dunn. "When most of us need only 1,800 or 2,000 calories for the whole day, you can see how easy it would be to over-do. But by making a few, simple changes to what you order or buy, you can knock the number of calories down significantly."

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Eat Smart, Move More...North Carolina is a statewide movement that encourages healthy eating and physical activity wherever people live, learn, earn, play and pray. To learn more, visit www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com or the ESMM consumer site at www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com .

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