

# Why healthy checkout?

Retail food environments can support good health or undermine it. Stores determine the range of choices their customers have, and the ways they display, price, and promote products influence what and how much people buy.

## Here are 4 reasons food stores should rethink checkout:

### 1 Give shoppers what they want.

76% of shoppers who purchased a food or beverage item at checkout felt regret after doing so, and 80% would prefer to have more healthy choices at checkout.<sup>1</sup> Retailers can support shoppers' intentions by providing healthier products throughout the store, particularly in areas like checkout where customers are prone to impulse buys.

### 2 Make your store more pleasant for parents shopping with children.

More than 80% of Americans say that marketing efforts aimed at children, such as candy at checkout, create conflict between children and their parents.<sup>1</sup> Mothers reported that food marketing in supermarkets “hurts the relationship” with their kids because they are forced to argue with their children over food choices.<sup>2</sup>

The healthy checkout aisles at Harmons Grocery store in Utah have been so successful that all of their stores are adding an additional healthy checkout aisle.

“Moms and dads are especially thankful for them since they no longer have to deal with the kids asking for treats,” [Harmons Grocery Registered Dietitian Laura] Holtrop Kohl said. “Parents often let their kids



choose a piece of fruit or a granola bar as a reward instead of candy.”<sup>3</sup> Parent preferences for healthy checkout aisles are not unique to Harmons—more than 60% of shoppers say they would choose these lanes over those with candy, chips, and soda if given the option.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Caravan ORC International. *Checkout Polling*. Online survey of 1,024 adults. December 1-4, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> KRC Research. “Findings from Focus Groups among Mothers on Food and Beverage Marketing to Children: Prepared for CSPI by KRC Research,” April 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Ivins J. “Grocery Chains Trading Sweets for Healthier Options in New Checkout Lanes.” *KSL.com* December 16, 2015. Accessed at <https://ksl.com/?sid=37794451&nid=1010&title=grocery-chains-trading-sweets-for-healthier-options-in-new-checkout-lanes>.

### 3 Support shoppers' health.

Most stores' checkout aisles provide few choices for shoppers looking for healthy snacks. Water, for example, is typically stocked in only half of supermarket checkout aisles and takes up less than 2% of the space across all checkouts. However, 40% of shoppers reported that they had purchased bottled water from checkout in the past 6 months. Similarly, although nuts and seeds take up less than 1% of space across all checkouts, 18% of shoppers had purchased nuts or seeds from checkout in the past 6 months.<sup>4</sup>



*A 2014 study of foods and beverages at checkout in 30 chain food and non-food stores in the Washington, D.C. area found that the majority of foods at checkout were candy, energy bars, chips, and cookies. There were only 13 facings of fresh fruit, 4 facings of dried fruit, 16 facings of 100% juice, and 0 facings of vegetables, for a total of 33 facings of fruits and vegetables out of a total of 8,800 food, beverage, and merchandise facings in the study.<sup>5</sup>*

### 4 Get ahead of the curve.

In England, four major grocery stores have eliminated candy in all their checkout aisles. In January 2016, Aldi committed to transitioning to healthier checkout lanes in its nearly 1,500 U.S. stores. At CVS, 25% of the front-end checkout space is now dedicated to better-for-you snacks.<sup>6</sup>

*“Aldi is expanding its natural foods selection and replacing sugary snacks at the checkout with healthier items. It’s a big move for a grocer ... and it’s great for consumers, especially lower-income shoppers. But it’s not so great for the competition, all of which is busily trying to court natural foods shoppers with healthier goods at reasonable prices.”<sup>7</sup>*

*“Since becoming the first and only national pharmacy chain to end the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products, the number one thing we’ve heard from our customers is the desire for healthier food options.”<sup>6</sup>*



**For more information, contact the Center for Science in the Public Interest at 202-777-8352 or [nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org](mailto:nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org).**

<sup>4</sup> Masterfoods, TDS, Wrigley, Dechert-Hampe & Co. *Front End Focus: Maximizing Checkout Performance*. Northbrook, Illinois: Masterfoods, 2010. Accessed at [http://www.frontendfocus.com/documents/publications/FEF\\_FMI2010-Presentation.pdf](http://www.frontendfocus.com/documents/publications/FEF_FMI2010-Presentation.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Fielding-Singh P, Almy J, Wootan MG. *Sugar Overload: Retail Checkout Promotes Obesity*. Washington, DC: CSPI, October 2014. Accessed at <http://cspinet.org/sugaroverload.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> CVS Pharmacy Expands Healthy Foods Initiative [press release]. Woonsocket, RI: CVS Pharmacy; June 21, 2016. Accessed at <https://cvshhealth.com/newsroom/press-releases/cvs-pharmacy-expands-healthy-foods-initiative>.

<sup>7</sup> Heller L. “Aldi’s Organic Plan Is Great for Consumers, Dangerous for Competition.” *Forbes* January 28, 2016. Accessed at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/lauraheller/2016/01/28/aldis-organic-plan-is-great-for-consumers/#152e314e7120>.