We are surrounded by foods, beverages, and dietary supplements that are making us sick.

As the nation’s food and health watchdog, the Center for Science in the Public Interest is cleaning up our food environment by holding both policymakers and companies responsible for their roles in undermining public health.

It takes more than consumer education to keep us well. **Cleaning up the food environment takes advocacy with an edge.**

I envision healthier public spaces where we live, work, and play, including:

- at supermarkets, where Americans purchase the majority of their calories;
- in schools, where many kids eat their main meal of the day;
- in senior nutrition programs, where good nutrition matters most; and
- at restaurants, where full-sugar drinks are often the default in kids’ meals and patrons have no warning about high-sodium items.

Building on a legacy of accomplishment, CSPI has audacious goals for the coming year. We will work with communities to improve access to healthy food, call out the bad actors in industry and government, safeguard the food supply, and fight for truthfulness in the labeling and marketing of food. We will vigorously defend against attacks on sound science and common-sense measures that protect public health and safety. And we will keep fighting for your interests and your good health—in Washington, in your community, and in the courts.

I invite you to partner with us in 2020. Get involved. Join us in our commitment to healthy communities and sound science—and to holding industry and government to account.

Thank you!

Dr. Peter G. Lurie, MD, MPH
President
There is a unique window of opportunity in 2020: The federal government, for the first time, is developing nutritional recommendations for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers under the age of two in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).

The DGA guides the nutrition standards for foods served in schools, federal feeding programs for older Americans, correctional facilities, and other public programs and places. CSPI is developing and promoting a strong, science-based position on dietary recommendations for these groups. We are combining that with consumer demand for “clean labels” to better protect pregnant women and children from hazardous chemicals in food.

**Fertility supplements:** CSPI has conducted an investigation into the misleading labels of supplements that claim to promote fertility. Our past investigations have prompted the FDA to remove supplements from the market that falsely claim to help with opioid addiction and smoking cessation.

**Mercury recommendations for pregnant women:** CSPI has called on the FDA to revise its advisory and action levels for mercury to reflect current science, and to develop materials for groups that consume high levels of higher-mercury fish.

CSPI issued a seafood chart with our own recommendations for how to communicate mercury (and omega-3) content to consumers—a chart that we seek, with your support, to circulate widely to consumers.
CSPI’s investigative report *Rigged: Supermarket Shelves for Sale* revealed how Big Food influences supermarket food environments. Backroom deals between stores and food manufacturers drive supermarket offerings, affecting the selection, placement, and promotion of products, often undermining people’s best intentions and health.

CSPI is encouraging supermarkets and other stores to take steps to support healthier purchases and reduce promotions of unhealthy options. We are meeting regularly with store management to urge grocery chains to make improvements and we are pursuing community policies. We will publish an assessment of healthy and unhealthy food marketing through online grocery platforms. To accelerate change, CSPI is developing a scorecard to evaluate in-store promotions of sugary beverages and other unhealthy foods and will compare practices in stores in lower- versus higher-income neighborhoods.

To address those most in need, CSPI will develop a model food and beverage donation policy for retailers to adopt to encourage donations of healthy food and beverages to food banks.

This marketing schematic from Frito-Lay illustrates the food industry’s strategy in grocery stores to place their products in as many places as possible, including freestanding displays, end-of-aisle shelves, and at the check-out register.
BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR A DC SUGARY-BEVERAGE TAX

Soda taxes are now on the books in seven jurisdictions nationwide, and rigorous evaluations show that they successfully raise revenue while lowering sugary-drink consumption. CSPI is working with local public health advocates, business leaders, and policymakers in Washington, DC, to promote a sugary-beverage tax as a strategy to improve health, raise needed funds, and reduce medical costs associated with diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic diseases among DC residents.

The tax is expected to raise $20-$30 million annually that will be invested back into communities that are disproportionately burdened by illnesses related to sugary-drink consumption.

GETTING SODA OFF KIDS’ MENUS

With half of every food dollar spent on eating out, restaurants are defining the social norm for children’s food as pizza, chicken nuggets, fries, and sugary drinks. But a national poll by the American Heart Association found that more than 80% of adults want restaurants to decrease unhealthy options on children’s menus.

CSPI is spearheading a movement to take soda and other sugary drinks off restaurant kids’ menus. Research shows that healthier default sides and drinks result in children getting 20% fewer calories in the average kids’ meal purchased.

California, Delaware, and Hawaii have passed statewide policies and more than a dozen jurisdictions have enacted policies. We have also convinced two dozen major restaurant chains, including McDonald’s, Burger King, Wendy’s, Dairy Queen, Olive Garden, Chipotle, and Red Lobster, to voluntarily drop sugary beverages from their kids’ menu.

However, two-thirds of the top chains still push sugary drinks on their kids’ menus. Help CSPI urge more companies to make commitments and push for more state and local policies to improve kids’ menus.
Consumers deserve good lawyers to fight Big Food and put their interests front and center. CSPI’s Litigation Department pioneered the use of private litigation to correct unfair and deceptive marketing practices and to fill the void between FDA regulations and enforcement.

Over the years, CSPI’s litigation department has stopped numerous deceptive labeling and marketing practices, prompted reformulation of some of the worst restaurant foods, and persuaded federal agencies to take action on important consumer issues. For example, CSPI’s litigation department spurred:

- Kellogg to adopt the first enforceable nutrition standards for marketing foods to children;
- the beverage industry to agree to pull full-calorie sodas out of schools nationwide;
- KFC and Burger King to halt their use of trans fat; and
- General Mills to better alert consumers that Cheerios Protein is not a protein-enriched version of the original, but instead has significantly more sugar and only negligibly more protein.

We are seeking support for CSPI’s legal team as it continues to take on the food industry for its contribution to obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

ADDRESSING THE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

Passage of the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act in 1994, which largely deregulated the dietary supplement industry, has resulted in a Wild West for consumers and a burgeoning industry with over $40 billion in annual sales. Today, supplements on the market make a wide range of unproven claims and hundreds of products are tainted with prescription drugs—notably, those sold for weight loss, sexual performance, and muscle building.

CSPI is seeking support to educate and mobilize the public about deceptively marketed and ineffective or harmful dietary supplements. We also advocate for increased transparency, oversight, and safety of supplements through corporate pressure campaigns, greater agency funding, regulatory changes, and legal action. Ultimately, we seek reform legislation to stop dishonest labeling and the marketing of potentially dangerous products.

In a settlement agreement between CVS and a nationwide class of consumers represented by CSPI’s Litigation Department, CVS agreed to provide refunds to consumers and refrain from claiming that their product has been “clinically shown” to improve memory for two years.
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD THROUGH STATE & LOCAL FOOD SERVICE GUIDELINES

One of most effective ways to ensure more equitable access to healthy food is through food service guidelines and healthy procurement policies.

State and local governments and large institutions—such as government buildings, parks, and recreational facilities to hospitals, prisons, and senior centers—are increasingly adopting food guidelines for the foods and beverages they purchase, serve, or sell.

These policies harness the purchasing power of governments and shift dollars that public institutions are already spending on high-sodium and sugary foods and beverages to healthier options.

Transforming community food systems in this way can be politically non-controversial, economical, and instrumental in reducing long-term community health costs.

CSPI is seeking funding to assist more national, state, and local organizations and government agencies in improving their food guidelines and in strengthening their level of commitment and resources dedicated to the issue.

EMERGING ISSUES

CSPI is constantly exploring new areas where our work can make a real difference in improving people’s lives. With your continued support, we will demand that science be used to promote the public good. And we will insist that government policies are transparent and consistent with scientific evidence on health.

For example, CSPI is exposing poor FDA oversight of certain classes of opioids and is the plaintiff in a lawsuit alleging that the government failed to comply with reporting requirements for clinical drug trials.

Stay tuned as these important campaigns develop in the coming year.
CAMPAIGNING AGAINST CHEMICAL ADDITIVES AND DYES

Thanks to factory-made foods, the chemical additives that are used to flavor and preserve our foods have become a significant part of our diet. CSPI ranks the safety of food additives in Chemical Cuisine, our definitive glossary of additives, from acetic acid to yellow prussiate of soda.

Some substances added to the food supply are deemed “generally recognized as safe” (GRAS) without any review by the FDA. In fact, the FDA allows companies to make their own secret determinations of a substance’s safety for use in our food. If companies decide that a new ingredient is GRAS, they don’t have to tell the agency or consumers why they believe it is safe or tell the government what or how much of it they have decided to add to our food.

CSPI is helping with a lawsuit to stop the secret GRAS process, asking the courts to declare this system illegal in light of federal law that requires the FDA—not private companies—to determine whether a new ingredient is safe to use in food.

We are seeking support to reform the way food additives are approved and to hold the FDA accountable for doing its job.

FIGHTING THE PRIVATIZATION AND Deregulation of MEAT INSPECTION

In the fall of 2019, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published a final regulation that privatizes and speeds up swine slaughter inspection, ignoring repeated calls by CSPI and other food safety, labor, and animal welfare groups to include better safeguards for consumers, workers, and animals.

The rule transfers work once performed by USDA inspectors to private slaughterhouse employees and allows slaughter lines to run at unlimited speeds. The agency is also pressing forward without a commitment to issue new federal testing standards for monitoring Salmonella or other pathogens in meat.

The USDA’s Office of the Inspector General is currently investigating whether the agency inappropriately concealed worker safety data during the rulemaking. CSPI has launched an urgent grassroots petition campaign urging Congress to block funding for the implementation of the final rule until that investigation is complete and the agency has identified adequate measures to prevent the rule from having a negative impact on food safety, worker health, and animal welfare.

Help CSPI ensure that “modernization” of USDA safety inspections doesn’t lead to the privatization and deregulation of vital food safety protections.

MODERN REGULATION FOR MODERN TECHNOLOGY

CSPI pushes for sensible government policies and corporate practices in the development of genetically modified and genetically engineered plants and animals that are released into the environment or that end up in our foods. We act as a watchdog, educate key stakeholders, and seek a mandatory pre-market approval process.

We seek support for promoting solutions that mitigate risk and maximize the benefits of new technologies. CSPI also advocates abroad for implementation of the Biosafety Protocols (a multilateral agreement of the Convention on Biological Diversity) by lending technical assistance to policymakers to advance a regulatory framework that ensures the safety of both consumers and the environment.
On April 2, 2016, guitar teacher Stephen Hacala (age 24) lost his life after drinking tea made with contaminated poppy seeds purchased on Amazon.com, possibly believing the tea would treat his insomnia. He was not aware that improper harvesting and handling can contaminate poppy seeds with morphine and codeine, addictive narcotics that can cause a deadly overdose when concentrated in a tea.

CSPI and Stephen’s parents, Steve and Betty Hacala, shared his story with the Food and Drug Administration and the Drug Enforcement Agency, urging those federal agencies to investigate and crack down on Amazon and other sellers of tainted seeds that have been linked to more than a dozen deaths in the U.S. to date. CSPI also lobbied on The Hill with the Hacalas in favor of a “Stephen Hacala Poppy Seed Safety Act,” which will give the FDA new authority to bring charges against food companies for selling contaminated seeds.

In October, Amazon took down many of its product postings for poppy seeds and imposed new size limits and enhanced vetting for poppy-seed sellers. We hope that action is precedent-setting at Amazon, which has been criticized before for failing to ensure the safety of consumer products sold through its platform.

Repeated contamination outbreaks in leafy greens and other produce highlight the need for improvements by both the government and private industry to enable swifter and more effective outbreak investigations. Industry must invest in better recordkeeping and tracing systems, and the government must improve its laboratory testing and data management.

CSPI is campaigning for full implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act at the FDA.

Lend your support to CSPI as we draft legislation that will create standards for industry to report key data to the FDA during an outbreak investigation, allowing “traceback” of contaminants quickly to the source. And help us lobby for a comprehensive new program to update technology systems at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
More antibiotics are sold for use in farm animals than are prescribed to humans, driving an urgent threat of antibiotic resistance with serious implications for both human and animal health.

These precious drugs are most often used not to treat sick animals, but instead to compensate for the insanitary, crowded, and stressful conditions in which most pigs, chickens, and cattle are raised.

CSPI is waging a campaign to improve the underlying conditions that lead to illness. We have had some significant wins that have reduced antibiotics use especially in poultry and will be working to induce beef and pork producers to follow suit.

We are seeking support to continue pressure on the FDA to restrict irresponsible uses, to lobby Congress for better monitoring and control of antibiotics use, and to encourage farming communities and industry leaders to embrace voluntary reductions in the unnecessary use of antibiotics.

Pharmaceutical giant Elanco launched a public relations campaign attempting to roll back consumer pressure for responsibly raised meat by muddying the waters on the human health hazards of routine use of antibiotics in animal agriculture. CSPI learned of the campaign after Elanco shared its strategy with the animal agriculture community. We teamed up with reporters at the Guardian and the New York Times to produce two extensive and explosive exposés on the campaign in June, effectively killing Elanco’s strategy.
Nearly half a million subscribers receive a wealth of information from CSPI’s acclaimed Nutrition Action Healthletter.

Free from advertising, CSPI’s scientists provide reliable analysis of the latest nutrition research, objectively review brand-name products, and independently rank foods in every issue. CSPI’s Healthy Cook Kate Sherwood shares her tricks of the trade in recipes that demonstrate how to enjoy a diet healthy for both families and the planet.