



# Friends of CFAC

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## ***TV Food Advertising to Children – THE FACTS***

***Television food advertising to children promotes unhealthy eating. This is thought to contribute to the rising levels of childhood obesity. Our children deserve to be protected against aggressive marketing of ‘junk food’!***

- Australian children (aged 5 to 12 years) watch an average of 23 hours of TV each week<sup>1,2</sup>, viewing up to 4 hours of advertisements over that week and up to 208 hours of advertisements over a year!
- Australian television shows one of the highest number of TV food ads during children’s programming in the world<sup>3</sup>.
- More than three-quarters of food advertisements shown during children’s TV viewing time promote foods of low nutritional value such as chocolate, confectionery, fast food outlets and sweetened breakfast cereal<sup>1,4</sup>.
- Food companies spend millions of dollars on marketing and advertising to children each year, with television advertising being the most powerful and effective method for reaching children<sup>5</sup>.
- Children are a naïve and vulnerable audience, who do not fully understand the purpose of advertising and can therefore be deceived by ads<sup>6-10</sup>.
- TV food advertisers use clever techniques such as prizes, give-aways, competitions, animations, jingles, popular personalities and an emphasis on fun to attract children’s attention and make them desire a product<sup>5</sup>.
- TV food advertising influences children’s food preferences, consumption behaviour and increases their requests for advertised products (‘pester power’) <sup>11,12</sup>, undermining parent’s attempts to provide healthy food choices for their children.
- Food advertising gives children a distorted message about healthy eating. Foods promoted to children directly contradict the recommendations of national guidelines and are consistent with an eating pattern associated with an increased risk of obesity<sup>5</sup>.
- According to the 1995 National Nutrition Survey, Australian children aged 2-18 years are eating a high percentage of energy dense, high fat, high sugar and low fibre foods<sup>13</sup>. Not surprisingly these foods are consistent with the types of foods heavily advertised to children.
- Childhood obesity in Australia is now one of the highest in the world and is rapidly increasing. From 1985 to 1995, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Australian children doubled<sup>14</sup>. Current figures show that approximately 25-30% of Australian children are overweight or obese<sup>15</sup>.
- Overweight and obese children have a high risk (80%) of becoming an overweight or obese adult<sup>16</sup> and the associated health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, learning difficulties, social isolation, poor self esteem and depression<sup>5</sup>.

**Information**

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