

JUNK FOOD INJUNCTION

2009 AUTUMN EDITION



Message from the Editors

This edition of *Junk Food Injunction* highlights a new advocacy campaign from public health and consumer groups, including Cancer Council, which aims to demonstrate community support for better regulations on unhealthy food marketing to children.

The BurgerCorp campaign is described in our article *Junk Food Advertising Comes Knocking at Your Front Door!* on page 1. To let government know that you support a ban on unhealthy food marketing to children go to the BurgerCorp website (www.burgercorp.com.au) and send a message to the Minister for Health and Senators in your state. Please send this link to as many people as you can.

In this edition, we also describe how food marketers are infiltrating classrooms; with a new school maths program sponsored by McDonald's and new research from the United Kingdom demonstrating underhand food marketing in schools. We also report on the marketing spin used by food companies to promote their products as healthier than they really are.

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Junk Food Advertising Comes Knocking at Your Front Door!

A new viral advocacy campaign to counter unhealthy food marketing directed at children was launched at the end of April. The BurgerCorp campaign has been developed to highlight the audacity of the food industry, who market unhealthy food to vulnerable children. ShamBurger, the BurgerCorp mascot, represents all the food companies that market unhealthy food to children. He infiltrates homes unannounced and unwelcome, and preys on children. Whilst he might look friendly and give away free toys, there is a hidden agenda behind his smile – to promote unhealthy food to children. Visit the BurgerCorp website today to pledge your support for tighter restrictions on unhealthy food marketing to children (www.burgercorp.com.au).

There is good evidence that food marketing influences children's food choices and their diets. This is concerning as most food marketing is for unhealthy foods, such as sugary breakfast cereals, confectionery, high-fat savoury snacks, soft drinks and fast food. Restricting unhealthy food marketing to children is an important step towards preventing obesity.

Children are seen by food marketers as having a lot of spending power: they have their own money to spend, they influence their parents' purchases, and establishing brand loyalty at an early age can ensure life-long purchases. Advertising encourages children to nag their parents for products. This "pester power" undermines parents' attempts to provide a healthy diet for their children.

The current government regulations do little to protect children from unhealthy food marketing. The Australian Communications and Media Authority oversees regulations covering television advertising to children. These Children's Television Standards contain many loopholes and rely on the general public to complain about advertising



breaches. Despite strong community support for better regulations to protect children from unhealthy food advertising, with over twenty-thousand members of the Australian community pledging their support for tighter regulations last year, the Communications Authority has since made only minor amendments to the Standards. The new proposed Standards still do not cover advertising during broadcast periods when the highest numbers of children are watching television, up until 9:00pm.

Parents and public health and consumer groups, including Cancer Council, are calling for tighter restrictions on unhealthy food marketing to children. The Government must place the rights of children and parents above commercial interests and develop and enforce meaningful regulations on unhealthy food marketing to children.

What can you do?

To make this campaign a success we need your help in enlisting community support. Please forward the link to the BurgerCorp campaign (www.burgercorp.com.au) to your family, friends and colleagues. The more support this campaign attracts, the more powerful an influence it will have on government.

McMaths Proudly Brought to you by Professor Ronald

Fractions using French fries, calculus using cheeseburgers ...this could be the new state of play as the fast food giant McDonald's introduces a branded online maths program into Australian high schools. Most alarmingly, the Commonwealth Government and Australian Secondary Principals' Association are supporting this program.

In a scheme reminiscent of the United States, where food marketing has long infiltrated school classrooms, McDonald's Australia is moving into schools with plans to offer a free maths program to more than 1.4 million students. Children will be exposed to the McDonald's logo and the words "Proudly provided by your local McDonald's restaurant" each time they start the program.

In the United States, Channel One; a 12 minute news program containing two minutes of advertisements from companies such as KFC, McDonald's and Pepsico, is shown in 12,000 or 38% of middle and high school classrooms daily. In exchange for providing the program and television equipment, students are required to watch the program on the majority of school days. Critics in the US have calculated that each child would be exposed to 31 hours of mandatory commercial television per year, and 310 minutes of advertising. But food marketing at school doesn't stop there. In the United States, food advertisers place logos and product samples on book covers, videos and curriculum guides, nutrition-related education materials, mathematics materials, web browsers and reading software. Refer to our article *Top Dodgy In-School Marketing Claims* on page 4 for more information on in-school marketing.

Australia currently has no mandatory regulations relating to in-school marketing. Voluntary guidelines on commercial activities do exist and are outlined in the National Code on Commercial Sponsorship and Promotion in School Education. This code states that school sponsorships and promotions should not place undue pressure on children, parents and schools to purchase particular products or services, and organisations should not seek the endorsement of their products or services as a condition of sponsorship. However, these guidelines are not enforceable.

With the lack of regulations on in-school marketing and Government support for branded education materials, there is a real potential for further commercialisation of schools. The adoption of promotional materials from unhealthy food companies serves to undermine other efforts to promote healthy lifestyles at school, such as through healthy school canteens. We fear that McDonald's *Big Machiavellian* scheme is only the beginning.

"Maccas should stick to making hamburgers and the Government should stick to educating children"

Adrian Piccoli, NSW Opposition education spokesman

In a nutshell

- BurgerCorp is a viral advocacy campaign which highlights the audacity of the food industry, who market unhealthy food to vulnerable children. Pledge your support for the campaign by visiting the BurgerCorp website (www.burgercorp.com.au).
- Food marketing is infiltrating the classroom with a new

Children the Target of CHOICE for TV Food Advertising

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: children are targeted with unhealthy food advertising on television, and the current regulations do not protect them from this commercial exploitation.

These were the findings of a recent study by CHOICE, which looked at advertisements shown on Sydney commercial television channels during one week last year. By classifying advertised foods according to the proposed Food Standards Australia New Zealand nutrient profiling criteria, which scores a product according to its energy, saturated fat, sugar, sodium, fibre, protein and fruit and vegetable content, CHOICE found that the majority (54%) of food ads shown on television are for unhealthy food and beverages. Fast food was the most advertised product overall.

Importantly, the number of unhealthy food ads increased between 6pm and 9pm, when the highest numbers of children are watching. Current government food advertising regulations do not apply during this peak viewing period. Further, during the most popular program for children, *So You Think You Can Dance*, two-thirds of all food ads were for unhealthy foods, such as potato chips, chocolate and fast food.

The findings from this study are supported by previous research from Sydney University, which found that unhealthy television food advertising was significantly higher during the most popular children's programs compared to lower rating programs. As unhealthy food advertising did not increase during adult's most popular programs, children are clearly the target of this marketing brunt.

For full access to this report go to www.choice.com.au/foodmarketing.



McDonald's sponsored online maths program to be released to 1.4 million students in Australia.

- Researchers show once again that children are targeted with unhealthy television food advertising and that government regulations are providing little protection.
- Nutrition claims in television advertisements and on food packaging are shown to be false and misleading.

Low Fat Chocolate and Other Nonsensical Nutrition Claims

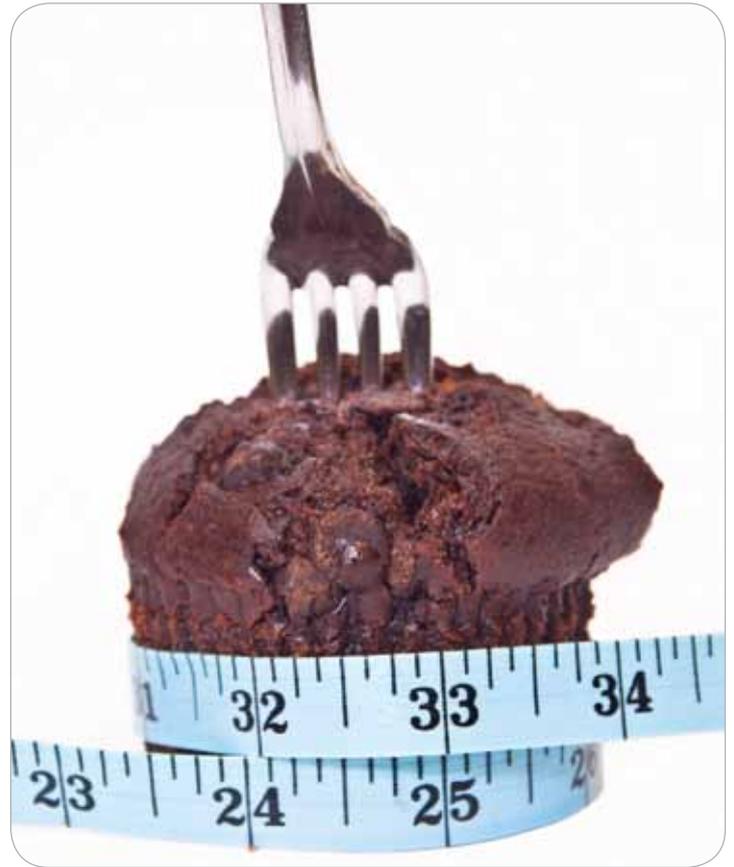
New research from the Institute of Obesity, Nutrition and Exercise at Sydney University, and published in the latest edition of *Nutrition and Dietetics*, shows nutrition content claims are used as a marketing tool, to exaggerate the nutritional quality or health benefit of food products.¹

The research, which looked at 714 hours of Sydney commercial television broadcasting over two years, found that nutrition content claims, such as “99% fat free”, were used in one in five food advertisements, and most of these claims were found in advertisements for unhealthy foods. These nutrition content claims promoted aspects of food products that might appear desirable, while ignoring other qualities that were less desirable.

Paradoxically, nutrition content claims for *high-sugar/low-fibre* breakfast cereals were mostly related to fibre content; while claims for chocolate and confectionery related to reduced fat content, reduced energy content and low sugar; and for cakes and biscuits, claims were predominantly for reduced fat content.

This type of marketing is misleading and deceptive. To ensure that consumers are well informed, the Australian food regulator, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, should follow the lead of other countries, including the European Union, and introduce disqualifying criteria for unhealthy products to prevent them from using nutrition content claims.

1. Kelly B, Hattersley L, King L, Flood V. Smoke and mirrors: nutrition content claims used to market unhealthy food. *Nutrition and Dietetics*. 66: 62. 2009.



	Cereal w/ 1/2 cup	Cereal Fat Free Milk
Calories	130	25
Calories from Fat	4%	4%
Total Fat 2.5g*	0%	0%
Saturated Fat 0g		
Trans Fat 0g		
Polyunsaturated Fat 0.5g		
Monounsaturated Fat 1.5g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	9%
Sodium 150mg	6%	8%
Potassium 75mg	2%	10%
Total Carbohydrate 25g	8%	8%
Dietary Fiber 2g		
Sugars 6g		
Other Carbohydrate 17g		
Protein 2g		
Vitamin A		
Vitamin C		
Calcium		
Iron		
Vitamin D		

Kellogg's Apprehended as a Cereal Offender

In the first round of the Parents Jury's Food Detectives investigations, Kellogg's Nutri-Grain cereal was found to be the worst offender for unsubstantiated marketing claims. The Parents Jury's Food Detectives aims to put the spotlight on food products which use marketing spin to masquerade unhealthy foods as good choices for children.

Nutri-Grain is marketed as “Iron Man Food” that “helps fuel growing boys”. However, its very low fibre content and high levels of sugar, comprising almost one-third of the entire product, suggests that the only thing this cereal is helping to fuel is unhealthy diets.

On a positive note, Sanitarium Weet-Bix Kids was awarded the Badge of Honour; for its good nutritional profile and endorsement by the Wiggles. Weet-Bix Kids is high in fibre and low in sugar, salt and fat. Weet-Bix Kids' association with popular children's characters proves that it is possible to create a fun and popular healthy children's cereal.

What can you do?

Parent's Jury members are asked to nominate food products that they think are the worst offenders for misleading food marketing. The Food Detectives will investigate other categories of children's foods and drinks later this year. Become a member of Parents Jury today, visit www.parentsjury.com.

Real Kids' Food: Healthy Recipes

Bubble and Squeak with Cheesy Toast

Serves 4

Ingredients:

3 medium washed potatoes, peeled and chopped
150g sweet potato, peeled and chopped
1 carrot, peeled and chopped
1/4 cup frozen peas
1 tablespoon dried breadcrumbs
Cracked black pepper
4 slices wholemeal bread
Low-fat cheese, grated



Method:

1. Steam or microwave the vegetables until tender. Set aside for 5 minutes then mash roughly. Stir through breadcrumbs.
2. When cool enough to touch, take 1/3 cup of the mixture and shape into rough rounds. Heat a little oil in a large non-stick frying pan over medium heat. Cook each cake for 2-3 minutes or until golden brown.
3. As the bubble and squeak cakes are cooking, top the bread with grated cheese and toast in an oven grill until melted and golden. Serve with a couple of the bubble and squeak cakes.

Tips:

Cut the bread into fun shapes using a pastry cutter before toasting.

Try other vegetables like pumpkin, zucchini or broccoli.

Source: Taste.com.au - February 2008, Page 4

Top Dodgy In-School Marketing Claims

Disturbingly, schools are recognised by food marketers as a potential marketing gold-mine, with an article in *Marketing Week* stating that schools were “once a relatively unbranded environment, [but] cash-strapped educational institutions have started to let brands through their gates in growing numbers”.

Food marketing within schools is unacceptable and compromises children’s proper education for the sake of marketing revenue. A report from the Children’s Food Campaign in the United Kingdom highlights the top dodgy claims used by food marketers in education materials. These claims have been summarised below.

1. Children who need to lose weight should not eat less food

The Food and Drink Federation were quoted as saying that “children should not reduce food intake to lose weight”. However, for some overweight children restricting energy intake may be appropriate.

2. Soft drinks are not made with additives, but ‘gooditives’

A chart produced by Britvic, a soft drink manufacturer, which illustrates how soft drinks are made, shows that ‘gooditives’ are one of the ingredients.

3. Unhealthy people should eat more cheese

The British Cheese Board, when addressing those identified in a lifestyle quiz as having unhealthy diets, claim that “the many nutrients in cheese – such as protein, vitamin A and calcium – will soon have you a lot healthier”. While dairy foods, including cheese, can provide important nutrients, the high saturated fat and sodium content of cheese means that it should be eaten in moderation.

4. Make sure your breakfast includes some sugary and fatty food

PhunkyFoods (partly funded by Nestle) have produced a lesson plan which “ask(s) the children to consider and discuss if the breakfast they’ve been given includes something from every food group on the PhunkyFoods Plate of Health?” Incidentally, this plate contains a section for high fat, high sugar foods.

5. Crisps are healthier than apples

The European Snack Association, which includes prominent crisp manufacturers Pringles and Walkers, have been quoted as saying “in the table below a comparison is made between the nutrient content of a 30g bag of chips and an apple. As you can see the bag of chips provides from thrice to thirty times as much of all the vitamins and minerals, three times as much energy, more fibre and complex carbohydrate. So how do you define a healthier food – one that is nutritionally inferior?” This type of blatantly misleading misinformation would never be accepted in traditional media.

6. Sugary food and drink is like bread, rice and pasta

The British Soft Drinks Association claims that “carbohydrate is where we get most of our energy from. Carbohydrates are found in starchy foods like bread, rice, pasta and potatoes. Sugary foods are also carbohydrate”. While this statement is inherently true, this claim could be misconstrued as meaning that sugary foods are as nutritionally important as breads and cereals, which also contain fibre and vitamins and minerals.

For full access to this report go to

http://www.sustainweb.org/pdf/Through_the_Back_Door.pdf