

# JUNK FOOD INJUNCTION

2008 SUMMER EDITION



## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

We hope that 2008 will bring changes to the way food is marketed to children. With the new Rudd Labor government, who have pledged to help "working families," restricting food marketing to children is one move that will make the job of parents easier.

Also, the revised statutory Children's Television Standards are due to be released in mid-2008. Continued advocacy and research in this area are needed to ensure that appropriate and enforceable food marketing regulations are put in place, and that these regulations cover all forms of food marketing to children, not solely television advertising.

This edition of *Junk Food Injunction* describes recent Cancer Council NSW research relating to parent's awareness and concern about food marketing to children, the industry's review of their Code for Advertising to Children and lessons learnt from the new UK television advertising to children regulations, and sports sponsorship, an important yet under researched form of food marketing to children.



## INDUSTRY CODE FOR ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN: MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING?

The industry regulated Code for Advertising to Children is currently under review, but is it likely that any appreciable changes in children's exposure to unhealthy food advertising will result? The Australia Association of National Advertisers is an advertising industry body, which, with their Code for Advertising to Children, form part of the complex government and industry co-regulatory system for regulating advertising to children in Australia.

This review, for which public submissions closed late in 2007, occurs at a time when the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the government advertising regulatory body, are reviewing their own Children's Television Standards. The question remains if this timely interjection by industry is a genuine effort to better protect children from advertising or if it is a tactical attempt to deflect stronger government regulations?

Moves by industry for self-regulation are seen to stifle the progression of government advertising regulations. In a recent review of international regulations for food advertising to children, published in the American Journal of Public Health, it was found that industry self-regulation was highest in areas where there was more pressure from the community and government, as was the case in Australia.

While there is a place for industry self-regulation, in terms of preventing clearly misleading and deceptive advertising, this form of regulation will never go so far as to restrict the volume of food advertisements that children are exposed to, the types of food and drink products that they are promoting and the persuasive marketing techniques that are used to attract children. As the Australia Association of National Advertisers represents the advertising industry, they are not likely to impose any restrictions that would inhibit their own livelihood.

The Cancer Council NSW, as part of the Coalition on Food Advertising to Children has provided a submission to the Australia Association of National Advertisers as part of this review process. In this submission we have stressed the need for industry to take into account the real issues related to food marketing and children, such as the types of food products in these advertisements and the time of day that they are broadcast. We have also encouraged the Australia Association of National Advertisers to seek independent advice and expertise from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to ensure consumers are protected. These measures, if acknowledged, should ensure that this review process is not merely a manoeuvre by industry to vouchsafe continued government inaction.

# PARENTS TIRED OF RUNNING THE JUNK FOOD GAUNTLET THAT IS THE SUPERMARKET CHECKOUT

Of all types of food marketing to children, parents are most concerned about the positioning of food at supermarket checkouts. According to recent research conducted by The Cancer Council NSW over 80% of parents are concerned about this type of marketing. Concern for this point-of-sale marketing is warranted, as research has shown that placement of food at supermarket checkouts is usually within children's reach and that the vast majority of these items are chocolate and confectionery.

In November 2007, The Cancer Council NSW, in association with researchers from the Prevention Research Centres at the University of Sydney, conducted a representative survey of 402 parents in NSW, to determine parent's awareness and attitudes towards non-broadcast (non-TV) food marketing to children. Overall, while parent's awareness of most forms of non-broadcast food marketing to children was low, their concern about these practices was high. Findings from this survey emphasise the need for community education about the many channels through which food marketers target children.

Further, parents unanimously distrusted the food and advertising industries to protect children from the harmful effects of food marketing, and believed that the government should put tougher restrictions in place so that unhealthy food cannot be marketed to children.

Currently, government regulations for non-broadcast food marketing to children are virtually non-existent. Those regulations that do exist, such as the Trades Practices Act, focus solely on preventing misleading and deceptive advertising; issues that do not get to the heart of the marketing tactics that are used to target children.

Continued advocacy efforts are required to ensure that the government heeds the calls of parents, and puts the rights of children above the commercial interests of the food and advertising industries.

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## UK: EXPERTS CRITICISE NEW TV FOOD ADVERTISING REGULATIONS

Effective from the 1st of January this year, the UK government has banned all unhealthy food advertising during TV programs that appeal to children and adolescents less than 16 years of age. These restrictions, as estimated by the UK broadcast regulator, Ofcom, will reduce the exposure of children aged 4-15 years to unhealthy advertisements by 41%.

While these new UK regulations are certainly more effective than the current Australian regulations, which do not pose any limitations on the type of food that can be promoted to children on TV, experts in the UK are questioning their efficacy.

The most significant shortcoming of these new regulations is that they fail to restrict unhealthy food advertising during periods when children are actually watching TV. The regulations only apply to TV broadcast periods where children make up a substantial proportion of the viewing audience. Therefore, for programs that are popular with whole families, where adults are watching as well as children, the regulations do not apply. These regulatory conditions mean that 18 out of the 20 most popular children's programs will be exempt from advertising regulations.

In the development of the new statutory Children's Television Standards in Australia, which are due to be released in the first half of 2008, the Australian Communications and Media Authority must consider lessons learnt from these UK regulations. The Cancer Council NSW, as part of the Coalition on Food Advertising to Children, have provided recommendations to the Australian Communications and Media Authority to base TV food advertising restrictions on the number of children watching. Such a condition would prevent unhealthy food advertising to children during all of their popular programs, many of which also have a high adult audience, including programs like Big Brother, the Simpsons and Friday night football.

# THE COLONEL'S LATEST PUBLIC RELATIONS MOVE OUT FOR A DUCK

It's difficult to miss the latest inane series of KFC TV advertisements that have been broadcast this summer during the cricket, with top Australian cricket players such as Ricky Ponting, Michael Clarke and Michael Hussey insinuating that this high fat, high salt fast food is in some way related to their sporting performance.

KFC is just one of a series of sponsors for Cricket Australia, which promote unhealthy products including Nestle Milo, Johnnie Walker whiskey and VB beer. However, Cricket Australia is not alone in its endorsement of unhealthy food and beverage sponsors. A quick look on the major Australian professional sporting organisations' websites including the Football Federation Australia, Netball Australia and National Rugby League, as well as community sporting organisations, such as Little Athletics, indicate that all of these organisations accept sponsorship from unhealthy food companies.

Research from New Zealand has indicated that sports sponsorship is a prevalent form of marketing, in general, and that companies promoting unhealthy food, gambling and alcohol are twice as frequent as those that promote healthy or neutral products. No such Australian research is available, although it is likely that unhealthy products dominate sport sponsorship to children in Australia as well.

In Australia, regulations currently prohibit tobacco company sponsorship of sporting organisations and events, and some restrictions apply to alcohol sponsorship. In contrast, unhealthy food and beverages can be freely promoted to children through sponsorship.

The marketing of unhealthy food through sponsorship propagates a positive corporate image for food companies. Their association with well-known and respected sporting organisations offers them a public relations windfall as these sporting organisations are seen to endorse their products; products that are often in direct contrast to the health goals of physical activity participation. Government restrictions on the type of food companies that can contribute to sport sponsorship, as well as research to define the scope of this issue in Australia should be considered.



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The best part about being captain is when I tell the boys we're having a Backyard Bucket for tea...then they all get exactly what they want.

*Ricky Ponting, Australian Cricket Captain*

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## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

We at The Cancer Council NSW are very interested to hear about the companies that are sponsoring children's community sports in Australia. If your children participate in community sports check out the companies that are sponsoring this organisation, and email Bridget ([bridgetk@nswcc.org.au](mailto:bridgetk@nswcc.org.au)) to let us know.

## In a nutshell

- The advertising industry is reviewing their Code for Advertising to Children, however care must be taken to ensure that this review considers the real issues related to food marketing to children.
- Government TV advertising regulations must consider lessons learnt from the UK, so that restrictions apply when children are actually watching TV.
- Parents are highly concerned about most forms of non-broadcast unhealthy food marketing to children, especially confectionery at supermarket checkouts.
- Sport sponsorship is a powerful marketing tool, and further Australian research in this area is needed.

## Real kids' food: Healthy Recipes

### Sushi Sandwiches

Serves 24



#### Ingredients:

- 8 slices wholemeal bread, crusts removed
- 310g can creamed corn
- 1 small carrot, peeled, grated
- 1 small Lebanese cucumber, peeled, cut into long strips
- 200g can salmon in spring water, drained
- 2 tablespoons low fat mayonnaise
- 2 to 3 iceberg lettuce leaves, washed, dried, finely shredded
- 1 small avocado, cut into long strips

#### Method:

1. Place bread onto a flat surface. Use a rolling pin to flatten bread slightly.
2. Spread corn over 4 slices, leaving a 2cm strip free of filling along 1 edge. Top with carrot and cucumber. Roll up to enclose filling. Cut each sandwich into 3 rounds.
3. Place salmon and mayonnaise into a bowl. Mix gently to combine.
4. Arrange lettuce over remaining 4 slices of bread, leaving a 2cm strip free of filling along 1 edge. Top with salmon mixture and avocado. Roll up to enclose filling. Cut each sandwich into 3 rounds.
5. Wrap all sandwiches in plastic wrap. Store in the fridge until ready to pack into lunch boxes.

\*Great back-to-school healthy lunch box idea.

Source: Super Food Ideas - February 2005, Page 24

## Top 10 diet and physical activity strategies for reducing your cancer risk

Recently The World Cancer Research Fund released their diet and physical activity recommendations for cancer prevention. Maintaining a healthy body weight and being physically active were confirmed as important lifestyle factors for reducing the risk of cancer. The World Cancer Research Fund report supports recommendations from The Cancer Council, and provide the following strategies for achieving these lifestyle goals:

1. Be as lean as possible within the normal range of body weight and avoid weight gain in adulthood.
2. Be physically active as part of everyday life, including at least 30 minutes of moderate activity (such as brisk walking) daily. Limit sedentary activities such as watching television.
3. Limit your intake of high fat, high sugar foods, and avoid sugary drinks like soft drink.
4. Eat mostly foods of plant origin, including at least five serves of vegetables and two serves of fruit each day.
5. Limit your intake of red meat and avoid processed meat.
6. Limit or avoid drinking alcohol.
7. Avoid salt-preserved, salted, or salty foods.
8. Achieve nutrient intake from diet alone, dietary supplements are not recommended for cancer prevention.
9. Mothers should aim to breastfeed exclusively for six months, and continue to breastfeed with complementary feeding thereafter.
10. Cancer survivors should follow the recommendations for cancer prevention.

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