



COALITION ON FOOD ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN

PO Box 408. Parkholme. SA 5043.

www.chdf.org.au/foodadstokids

Speaking out against unhealthy food advertising to children

PRESS RELEASE

Health Ministers have a chance to tackle junk food advertising to children

Our health ministers have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on childhood obesity at their meeting on 17 November. We have sufficient evidence linking junk food advertising to children with overweight and obesity. The National Obesity Taskforce set up to recommend best strategies for tackling childhood obesity, recognised this problem. The Taskforce report advocated "Better protection for young people against the promotion of high energy, poor nutritional value foods and drinks," and outlined some strategies to do this. Their report Healthy Weight 2008: The National Action Agenda for Children and Young People and their Families, was released a year ago and so far no action has been taken in this area, while children's weight continues to increase.

The industries concerned with advertising junk food to children naturally do not want their activities restricted and they have lobbied politicians hard on this issue. Comments made by our Federal Health Minister in a recent ABC Four Corners interview indicated that he has caved in to the pressure of industry lobbying. He seems intent on placing the sole responsibility for children's food choices onto the shoulders of parents.

The reality is that obesity is complex with many factors contributing to the problem. Parents cannot carry sole responsibility for childhood obesity. All players contributing to the problem need to be part of the solution. Children continue to be bombarded by junk food advertisements during their favourite programs, and this needs to be tackled if we are serious about stopping the obesity crises. Parents do not control advertising and our Federal Health Minister cannot in all fairness put this responsibility for change onto parents. He needs to take the industries on and restrict their aggressive marketing to children.

Research with parents show that they do want to take responsibility for their children's eating but they want some help to counteract the strong influence of junk food advertising.

The Coalition on Food advertising to Children, representing peak medical, health and consumer organisations, calls on the Health Ministers Conference to advance the recommendations made by the National Obesity Taskforce. In particular, to review and strengthen the regulations governing television food advertising to children so that they work to protect children.

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Additional Information

- For more information about CFAC and evidence supporting restrictions on food advertising to children, consult our website www.wch.sa.gov.au/foodadstokids.html
- 2004/2005 Research Summary

Coalition on Food Advertising to Children - Website Survey

This survey was initiated to gather information on the views and opinions of the general public regarding television food advertising directed to children, and to determine whether people share CFAC's concern regarding the impact of television food advertising on children's nutrition habits and future health.

Period: November 2004 – February 2005

Number of respondents = 116

Profile: 85% Australian Residents, 15% from USA, UK, Taiwan, New Zealand, Germany, Canada.

Question			
Are you concerned about TV food ads directed at children?	91% Yes	7% No	2% Don't know
If 'yes' what are your main concerns?	<p>35% 'too much unhealthy / junk food advertised on television'.</p> <p>27% 'effect of food advertisements on future health and lifestyle choices of children'.</p> <p>17% 'use of toys, gimmicks, colours and catchy tunes by food companies to market products directly at children'.</p> <p>13% ' ads inciting pester power'</p>		
What actions do you think need to be taken to improve TV food advertising directed at children?	<p>42% 'complete ban on food ads during children's viewing hours'.</p> <p>30% ' increase the number of ads for healthy foods to educate and encourage children and parents to make healthier food choices'.</p> <p>29% ' impose stricter regulations to restrict and govern what food ads may be shown during children's viewing hours'.</p>		
TV food ads directed at children encourage poor eating habits that can lead to childhood overweight and obesity	93% Agree	4% Disagree	3% neither
TV food ads directed at children make it difficult for parents/carers and health professionals to encourage healthy eating for children	90% Agree	4% Disagree	6% neither
Regulations to protect children from TV food advertising should be improved	94% Agree	3% Disagree	3% Neither

Research on parents' perceptions about the influence of television food advertising on children's food choices

Parents with children attending primary school were interviewed. The research found that *Parents are not happy about television food advertising directed at their children.*

During July to September 2004, five focus groups with parents with children attending primary schools in Adelaide were conducted. The research project spoke with 24 mothers and 8 fathers.

Key Themes

- Parents considered TV food advertising to exert a strong influence on children's eating habits, and they expressed concern about the negative effect of TV food advertising on children's food preferences.
- The use of toys or premiums in TV food advertising was of particular concern to parents. They consistently expressed strong views on the regulations governing the use of toys or premiums in advertising and interpreted the relevant regulation as meaning that promoting the toy should not take up more advertisement-time than promoting the food product. They suggested that the current regulations governing TV food advertising were not adequately enforced.
- Parents wanted to see more advertisements aimed at children, that promoted healthy foods
- Parents wanted to see the number of TV food ads aimed at children, to be reduced. They expressed concern about the bombardment and repetition of these ads.
- Most groups acknowledged the role of parents in controlling children's exposure to TV food ads and their consequent demands for highly-advertised foods.
- Parents had mixed views about banning TV food advertisements aimed at children as a measure of control. Some parents felt that a ban would support their role in educating children about healthy food choices.

South Australian Department of Health - Health Monitor Survey February 2004

This survey randomly sampled 2000 SA households and asked their opinion about TV food advertising to children.

1. "There is too much advertising of unhealthy food during children's viewing time." (NB unhealthy food includes low-nutrient, high energy food such as chocolate, lollies and fast food restaurants)
71.3% Agree
2. "Television advertisements for food such as chocolate and lollies and food from fast food restaurants cause children to persuade their parents to purchase the food advertised."
88.6% Agree
3. "The advertising on television of toys and giveaways associated with food products influence children to want to buy the food." (giveaways such as a toy with a burger purchase)
94.2% Agree
4. "Australia has the highest level of television food advertising directed at children, compared to other countries such as the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom. How concerned are you about this?"
87.6% Concerned

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