



TV Bombards Children With Commercials for High-Fat and High-Sugar Foods

Childhood obesity in the United States is reaching epidemic proportions. With more than one-fourth of advertising on daytime and prime time television devoted to foods and beverages, a study in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* examines how food ads aimed at children might be a large contributor to the problem.

Researchers at the University of California, Davis examined the types of food advertisements seen by children watching English- and Spanish-language American TV programs on Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons, which are high viewing times for children. Recordings were made of programs on 12 networks.

Out of 5,724 commercials recorded, 1,162 were food-related, with 91.2% of food promotions in English, and 8.7% in Spanish. Only one commercial was bilingual. Overall, nearly 1 in 5 advertisements was for a food- or nutrition-related product, with 5.2 food ads presented every hour.

Children's networks had the highest percentage of food-related commercials. These were predominately for sugary cereals and sweets, high-fat food, convenience or fast-food restaurant food, and chips/crackers. When compared to programming for a general audience, children's networks exposed young viewers to 76% more food commercials per hour than did the other networks. Approximately 7.7 food commercials per hour appeared in programming for children, which is approximately one food commercial every 8 minutes.

As children move into adolescence, they begin to watch more youth programming such as the music videos offered by BET and MTV. Eighty percent of MTV food commercials were for fast-food restaurants, sugar-added beverages and sweets.

In contrast, fruits, vegetables and juices were advertised in only 1.7% of the commercials. Only one nutrition-related public service announcement was found for every 63 food ads.

In the article, the authors state, "Study after study has documented the adverse health effects of food advertising targeting children and adolescents. Health educators need to develop and evaluate comprehensive nutrition programs that augment nutritional education with media use reduction strategies to lessen exposure to ads. School- and family-based programs that have attempted to reduce children's media use have shown promise.

"Reduced media use is insufficient by itself, for food advertising has increased in other types of media children use, such as the Internet. Thus, efforts should also be made to introduce media literacy training into nutrition programs. Greater awareness of the potential influence of industry may immunize young people from food advertising's deleterious effects."

REFERENCE:

BELL, R.A., PH.D, ET AL. "FREQUENCY AND TYPES OF FOODS ADVERTISED ON SATURDAY MORNING AND WEEKDAY AFTERNOON ENGLISH- AND SPANISH-LANGUAGE AMERICAN TELEVISION PROGRAMS." *JOURNAL OF NUTRITION EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOR*, VOLUME 41, ISSUE 6, (NOV/DEC 2009) PUBLISHED BY ELSEVIER.

Chip-in to Health

Usually the recommendation is to keep away from the middle aisles of the grocery store. While this remains important advice in terms of nutritional health, there are indeed a few solutions for those who find it difficult to stay away from nonproduce snacks.

Go for an all-natural, gluten-free and kosher option like Hippiie Chips. With no cholesterol or trans fats, these baked (not fried) chips are light in texture, so they won't weigh you down, but are heavy in flavor.

For more information, visit www.rocknrollgourmet.com.

Another choice is Corazonas, which come in a variety of unique flavors and are infused with plant sterols to help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. Try the Parmesan Peppercorn potato chips or the Squeeze of Lime tortilla chips. All flavors of tortilla and potato chips are kosher and lactovegetarian. The whole-grain tortilla chips and potato chips are gluten-free.

Available at www.corazonas.com and www.amazon.com.

