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RESOURCES: MARKETING TO CHILDREN

There Is a Link Between Food and Beverage Advertising and Rising Childhood Obesity Rates.

The growing epidemic of childhood obesity has brought renewed attention to the role of food and beverage advertising and marketing in negatively influencing the eating habits of youth. In 2003, the World Health Organization concluded that extensive marketing of fast food and high calorie foods and beverages to children is a probable causal factor for the accelerating global trend in weight gain and obesity.¹ Research indicates that children view an estimated 40,000 commercials each year, with an average of one food commercial for every five minutes of viewing time.² With the media gaining increasingly more attention through television and the Internet, children are continually exposed to the harmful influences of corporate marketing and advertising.³

Children Have Become Targets of Food and Beverage Marketing. Children are recognized by the food, beverage, and restaurant industries as a major market force because of their spending power, purchasing influence, and anticipated brand loyalty as adult consumers. Figures show that children under age 14 purchase \$24 billion in products and influence \$190 billion in family purchases each year.⁴⁻⁶ Research suggests that the mere appearance of a television or movie character with a product can significantly alter a child's perception of that product.⁷ The food and beverage industries benefit from this phenomenon by using popular celebrity and cartoon "spokespeople" to market fast food or other high-calorie, nutrient-poor foods and beverages to children.⁸

CCPHA and the call to Congress for Action. In 2004 the California legislature passed a resolution ([SJR 29, Kuehl](#)) sponsored by CCPHA that called on Congress to take steps to curtail marketing unhealthy foods and beverages to children. The [fact sheet](#) on the resolution provides information on the problem of marketing to children.

CCPHA's Suggested Actions. In August 2004, CCPHA convened a [symposium on marketing](#) to children at which nine national experts discussed marketing and its contribution to the obesity epidemic. In conjunction with the symposium, CCPHA developed a list of [proposed actions](#) individuals can take to reduce the marketing of unhealthy foods to children.

Next Steps. With childhood obesity rates soaring, there has never been a more crucial time to limit the marketing of unhealthful products to our children. CCPHA calls on policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels to enact policies that will protect children from marketing of unhealthy products.

Footnotes.

¹ World Health Organization, *Marketing Food to Children: the Global Regulatory Environment*. Endorsed May 2004.

² American Psychological Association, *Report of the APA Task Force on Advertising and Children*. February 2004.

³ Center for Science in the Public Interest, *Pestering Parents: How Food Companies Market Obesity to Children*. November 2003.

⁴ Strasburger VC. Children and TV advertising: nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. *J Dev Behav Pediatr* 2001;22:185-187.

⁵ McNeal J. Tapping the three kids' markets. *American Demographics*. 1998;20:37-41.

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CCPHA Website Google

⁶ McNeal J. *Children as consumers: Insights and implications*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books. 1987.

⁷ Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU), Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc. *Self-Regulatory Guidelines for Children's Advertising*. 2002

⁸ American Psychological Association, *Report of the APA Task Force on Advertising and Children*. February 2004

OTHER RESOURCES

Center for Science in the Public Interest. ["Pestering Parents: How Food Companies Market Obesity to Children."](#) November 2003.

Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. ["The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity."](#) February 2004.

Institute of Medicine. ["Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?"](#) December 2005.

Kunkel, Dale, et al. ["Psychological Issues in the Increasing Commercialization of Childhood."](#) American Psychological Association, 20 February 2004.

Linn, Susan. *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*. New York: New Press, 2004.

Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

The California Endowment. ["Food and Beverage Industry Marketing Practices Aimed at Children: Developing Strategies for Preventing Obesity and Diabetes."](#) November 2003.

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