



Making Healthy Food Choices And Being Aware Of Unhealthy Advertising

Dear parents,

This week in the Healthy Beginnings 2-5 program, your child has learned about making healthy food and beverage choices. An important part of this is the marketing of unhealthy food choices to children. This newsletter will cover:

- Becoming aware of food-based marketing to children. Many advertisements promote unhealthy food products.
- Learning about the frequency of unhealthy food advertising. This advertising can be harmful.
- Strategies to help teach children about marketing.

What is so bad about food-based advertising?

- The marketing of food and beverages to children impacts their food and beverage choices.
- The majority of food and beverages marketed to children are unhealthy.
- Unhealthy food and beverage choices contribute to childhood obesity.

(CDPAC, 2008)

What does food and beverage based advertising try to sell?

Food and beverage advertising promotes unhealthy food. A Canadian study found that 73 % of food products marketed to children did not fit into *Canada's Food Guide* (Laurendeau & Marque, 2006). Sugar sweetened beverages, such as pop or juice cocktails, are heavily marketed to young children.

Why does food and beverage based advertising work?

Children are too young to understand and question the information provided to them through media. Advertisers spend a great deal of money targeting young children, who they hope will convince their parents to purchase an advertised food product.





How does food-based advertising work?

Advertising helps to make some brands familiar, such as large fast-food chains. Children learn about these brands and often ask their parents for these foods. Free gifts, likeable characters, catchy music, bright colors and toys are advertising strategies targeting young children. Repetition of a commercial also increases its marketing power. Advertising can occur through TV, radio, signs, displays or Internet. It can also occur at childcare or in the community through sponsorships.

How can I teach my preschooler about marketing?

Teach your child media literacy skills. This helps them to understand the tactics and impact of advertising.

- Talk to them about commercials. Discuss what they like about commercials and what they think the intent of the commercial is (i.e. What is the advertiser trying to do?).
- Together, check to see if advertised food and beverage choices are present in *Canada's Food Guide*.
- Teach children to resist products promoted in advertising. If a specific food or beverage product appeals to them, work together to create a healthy alternative.
- Encourage children to question advertisements. If a food or beverage is advertised as healthy or part of a balanced meal, ask children to explain why it is healthy and work together to learn about how advertised food and beverage products might benefit (or not) their growing bodies.

Try playing Snappy Foods

- Play this game in the grocery store, while driving, or while watching TV.
- When a child sees a product advertised to them, they call out “snappy food” and snap their fingers or clap their hands. See how many they can spot on each shopping trip, or have two siblings play to see who spots the advertised foods first.
- o Good hints to give children are to look for anything with their favourite TV or book characters on it or foods that are brightly packaged
- This game can also be adapted to I Spy in the grocery store – ‘I spy something healthy that is red’, and have your child guess it.

For more information, visit the Concerned Children’s Advertisers website at <http://cca-arpe.ca/>

Adapted from www.childhoodobesityfoundation.ca/files/files/AMoreI_food_advertising_directed_at_children.pdf, www.childhoodobesityfoundation.ca/files/files/CDPAC_marketing_to_children.pdf and www.childhoodobesityfoundation.ca/files/files/Dietitian_of_canada_advertising_to_children.pdf