

Unhealthy Food and Beverage Marketing to Young Children

A Guide for Parents

Do your children watch TV or use the internet? Are they with you when you walk down the street or ride the bus? Do you take them to the grocery store or out to eat?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then your children have seen food marketing. Unfortunately, it's mostly unhealthy foods that are being marketed to young children. And studies have shown that marketing affects what children want to eat and which brands they want you to buy. In one study, children reported that food in a package with a well-known brand logo tasted better than the exact same food without the logo.

Food marketing is everywhere. Today's marketing goes beyond TV, radio, and billboard ads. It also includes things like "advergames," product location, and product packaging, all of which can attract young children. *Advergames* are internet or mobile ads disguised as games. *Product location* includes things like placing foods at children's eye levels, such as in the checkout aisle, so they can easily see it and grab it. An example of *product packaging* is using well-known cartoon characters on cereal boxes. These characters look down at just the right angle to meet your children's eyes!

As a parent, there are things you can do to fight back against food marketing. Here are a few ideas:



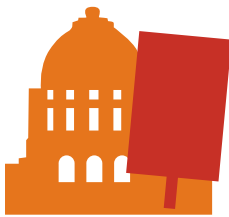
Notice it!

- Food marketing is in your community – find out where it is: On billboards? On fast food restaurants signs? In grocery store checkout aisles filled with candy? On TV ads while your child is at home or in childcare?



Talk about it!

- Talk with other parents and help them see that marketing is everywhere in your community.
- Talk to your children about marketing. You can let them know that advertisements are designed to make them want something.
- Tell companies that you want them to stop marketing to your children. Use social media.
- Report false or misleading advertisements to government officials. False and misleading advertising is against the law. It might include marketing that pretends to be something else, or that takes advantage of the fact that it's hard for children to understand marketing. For information on how to report it, visit: www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/identifying-misleading-ads.



Do something about it!

- Talk to people who can change how much marketing is in your community. Your local government officials can pass laws – go to city council meetings and talk with your mayor. Ask them what they can do about this problem. Can they pass a law that will limit the number of signs on the streets? Can they enact nutrition standards for foods sold in government-owned spaces? Make sure they know how much you care about the issue of unhealthy food marketing.
- Talk with your local grocery store owners. Ask them to place only healthy items in checkout aisles.
- Talk with your childcare providers. Ask them to limit children's screen time and serve them only healthy foods.

For **additional strategies** to consider in your community, see the list found in *Policy Options to Address Unhealthy Food Marketing*.

For a **fact sheet** to give to local policymakers, see *Regulating Marketing to Young Children: A Guide for Policymakers*.

For a **detailed legal analysis** of policies to address food marketing to young children, see the full report, *Marketing Matters: A White Paper on Strategies to Reduce Unhealthy Food and Beverage Marketing to Young Children*.