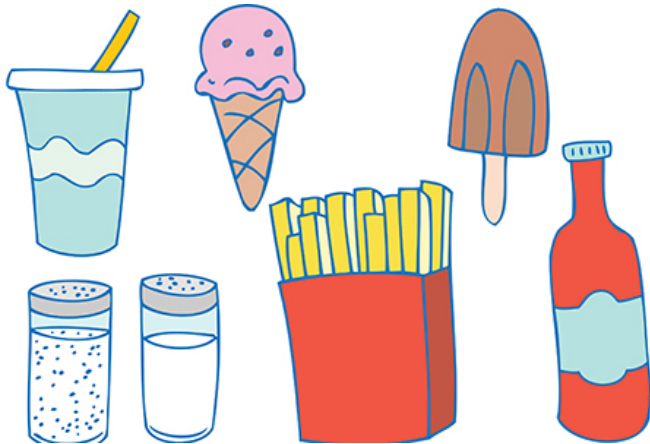


Family TV saturated with junk food adverts

24 March 2014



BHF Chairman, Simon Gillespie: "Parents don't expect their children to be bombarded with adverts for unhealthy food during primetime TV, but that's exactly what happens"

(Medical Xpress)—Researchers from the University of Liverpool have found that young people are exposed to adverts that promote unhealthy food during primetime TV, which are normally banned from children's programming.

An analysis of more than 750 [adverts](#) found that almost one in four TV adverts shown between eight and nine pm were for food, and it was possible for [viewers](#) to be exposed to as many as eleven adverts for junk food per hour.

Within these food adverts, the most frequently shown adverts promoted unhealthy products from [supermarkets](#) such as Aldi and Morrisons (25%), followed by fast-food chains such as KFC (13%), with chocolate and sweet companies like Lindt and Haribo the third most common (12%).

Children's viewing peaks at 8pm

Figures also showed that children's TV viewing peaks around eight pm, but laws created to protect children from targeted adverts don't typically cover

this time.

The study found that the clips shown between eight and nine pm were designed for a young audience, with nearly a third of food adverts shown using themes of 'fun' rather than more adult concerns of price or convenience. They also found that over half of the clips used children or child-aged characters to promote their food.

Promotion of [unhealthy food](#) products continues after the adverts have been broadcast with around a third of the adverts studied ending with a website or twitter hashtag – a key way of reaching teenagers, as thirty six per cent of 8-15 year olds use smartphones or laptops 'most times' when watching TV.

Psychologist, Dr Emma Boyland, from the Institute of Psychology, Health and Society, said: "Our research found a glaring loophole in junk food marketing between the time when most children are watching television and the time covered by regulation, and this needs to be closed.

"To shield younger audiences from persuasive promotion, adverts for unhealthy food need to be pushed back until after the nine pm watershed. This should be combined with consistent regulation online to stop children being bombarded with internet advertising."

The research was commissioned by 'Action on Junk Food Marketing', an alliance of concerned organisations headed by the Children's Food Campaign and the British Heart Foundation (BHF), which wants the Government and Ofcom to take action to protect children from junk food marketing.

Simon Gillespie, Chief Executive of the BHF, said: "Parents don't expect their children to be bombarded with adverts for unhealthy food during primetime TV, but that's exactly what happens.

Government should protect children

"Even when the show is over, junk food marketers could be reaching out to [young people](#) online. A lack of regulation means companies are free to lure kids into playing games and entering competitions – all with a view to pushing their product.

"We want the Government to protect children by switching off [junk food](#) adverts on TV until after nine pm and putting rules in place to stop children becoming fair game for internet marketing."

More information: For more information about Action on Junk Food Marketing visit the website: www.bhf.org.uk/ditchthejunk

Provided by University of Liverpool

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