

MARKETING OF UNHEALTHY FOODS TO CHILDREN

How TV advertising restrictions are failing children
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CAMPAIGN BRIEFING



TV ADVERTISING RESTRICTIONS FOR UNHEALTHY FOOD ARE FAILING CHILDREN

Which? research has found that Ofcom's restrictions are failing to stop food companies from advertising fatty, sugary and salty foods during the times that most children are watching television.

Which?'s analysis of viewing figures for ITV1, Channel 4 and 5 over a two week period in September 2007 found that 18 of the 20 most popular programmes watched by children under 16 will not fall under the restrictions. All 18 programmes will be able to show unhealthy food ads even when restrictions intended to protect this age group come into full effect in January 2008.

Which? research also shows that restrictions introduced in April 2007 to protect younger children from unhealthy food ads are already failing. Twelve of the top twenty programmes watched by under tens are not covered by the restrictions and these all featured adverts for unhealthy foods.

There is a strong similarity between the programmes most watched by older and younger children with Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway, The X Factor, New You've Been Framed and Coronation Street coming out as the top five for both groups. None of these programmes are covered by the advertising restrictions - and the unhealthy food ads Which? found being shown around the country during these programmes clearly reflect this.



for all consumers

WHY DON'T OFCOM'S RESTRICTIONS WORK?

New controls came into effect in April 2007 aimed at reducing children's exposure to unhealthy food ads. These currently apply to children under ten and will cover under 16s from January. They are based on restricting the advertising of foods high in fat, sugar and salt based on Food Standards Agency criteria during the programmes 'of particular appeal' to children.

But the restrictions only take into account the proportion of children watching, rather than the actual numbers and so the most popular programmes watched by both groups of children, such as Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Take-away and The X Factor, aren't covered.¹

WHAT WE FOUND

Which? looked at the TV viewing figures for ITV1, Channel 4 and 5, from 1-14 September 2007, to see which programmes children under ten and children under 16 were watching in largest numbers. Researchers from the British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group at Oxford University then analysed the food advertisements they were exposed to during these programmes, around the country².

The advertising restrictions are already supposed to be protecting children under ten but we found many adverts for foods high in fat, sugar and salt, highlighting the limitations of the Government's approach.

The Government's TV advertising restrictions for unhealthy food

Children covered: Ofcom's restrictions cover children up to age 16. The scheduling restrictions are being phased in with controls over programmes of appeal to children under ten coming into effect from April 2007 and for under 16s from January 2008.

Foods covered: The Food Standards Agency has developed a model for defining 'less healthy' foods which cannot be advertised during the programmes covered by the Ofcom restrictions.

The Government has said that it will review the new TV advertising restrictions in 2008. Interim reviews are being conducted this year by Ofcom, the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency.

¹ The Government restrictions, were developed by Ofcom, the Communications regulator. The definition of programmes that are "of particular appeal" to children is based on the viewing index for a programme. This reflects the proportion of children in the relevant age group that are watching. If a programme has a viewing index of 120 or more, then it will be covered by the Government's restrictions. As most of the programmes children watch in largest numbers are in the evening when adults are also watching, they generally have an index below 120 and so are not covered

² Based on Nielson data



The Government cannot afford to be so complacent. A recent Foresight report³ gave a stark warning that the prevalence of obesity has more than doubled in the last twenty five years. Sixty per cent of the population could be obese by 2050 with an associated sevenfold increase in direct health care costs and costs to society and the economy of around £45.5 billion. While a multi-faceted approach is needed to tackle obesity, it is clear that the way that foods are marketed to children influences children's food preferences and behaviour. Poor diets also have other long-term health consequences, including increased risk of cancers and heart disease.

Which? research has also shown strong support for effective restrictions. Seventy three per cent of parents believe that the way unhealthy foods are marketed to children makes it difficult to get them to eat healthily and eight in ten think that TV ads for unhealthy foods shouldn't be allowed when children are most likely to watch.⁴

WHICH? IS CALLING FOR

- > The Government to replace plans to extend the current restrictions in January 2008 with a 9.00 pm watershed for advertising of foods high in fat, sugar and salt. This will ensure that advertisements during the TV programmes children under 16 are most likely to be watching are included.
- > The Government must also introduce restrictions to tackle the wide range of non-broadcast methods, such as product packaging, sponsorship and the internet, that are also used to target unhealthy food to children.

³ Foresight Tackling Obesity: Future Choices - Project Report, October 2007

⁴ A Which? survey of 815 parents of 0 to 16 year olds in Great Britain between 9 February and 7 March 2006.



Examples of advertisements shown during the top programmes watched by under tens (1-14 September 2007)

Programme and ranking	Under-10s viewing (000's)	Viewing Index (only covered by controls if 120 or more)	Examples of foods high in fat, sugar or salt advertised ⁵
1. Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway	442.3	88.80	Mars, Milky Way, McDonald's Apple Pie and Toffee Sunday, Nestlé Honey Nut Cheerios and Twix
2. The X-Factor	412.8	87.04	Kinder Bueno, Milky Way, Twix, Mars and Maltesers
3. New You've Been Framed	366.5	80.67	Milky Way, Cheestrings, Nesquik Magic Straws, Kellogg's Frosties and Kellogg's Coco Pops Creations
4. Coronation Street	270.3	39.64	Milky Way, Twix, Mars, Maltesers and Nestlé Heaven Perles Praline
5. Emmerdale	177.6	35.64	Mars Planets, Milky Way, Twix, Galaxy Minstrels and Mars
6. The Simpsons	163.2	140.81	Comes under Government restrictions
7. The Bill	155.5	36.62	Kinder Bueno, Milky Way, Smarties, Twix and Galaxy Minstrels
8. Film: The Lord Of The Rings - The Fellowship of the Ring	142.7	66.33	Cadbury Dairy Milk, Kellogg's Cereal and Milk Bars: Coco Pops, Rice Krispies and Frosties, Pringles Rice Infusions and Nesquik Magic Straws

⁵ 'Less Healthy' as defined by the Food Standards Agency's nutrient profiling model, underpinning the Government's restrictions



9. Spongebob Squarepants	130.1	465.53	Comes under Government restrictions
10. Animals Do The Funniest Things	126.5	70.47	Maltesers, Pringles Rice Infusions, Cheestrings, Nesquik Magic Straws and Philadelphia Light Splendips Thai Sweet Chilli
11. Ben 10	120.6	602.53	Comes under Government restrictions
12. Britain's Favourite View	114.5	40.37	Werthers Original, Twix, Galaxy Minstrels, Maltesers, Toblerone Fruit and Nut and Pringles Rice Infusions
13. Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	113.0	32.69	Kinder Bueno, Milky Way, Smarties, Twix and Galaxy Minstrels
14. Bratz	113.0	423.09	Comes under Government restrictions
15. American Dragon	109.4	404.18	Comes under Government restrictions
16. Film: Edward Scissorhands	106.6	124.72	Comes under Government restrictions
17. Power Rangers Mystic Force	96.7	428.03	Comes under Government restrictions
18. Toonattik	94.3	467.38	Comes under Government restrictions
19. Supernanny	94.1	46.86	Cadbury Dairy Milk and Nesquik Magic Straws
20. Marc Bolan: 20 th Century Boy	93.1	55.58	Kellogg's Coco Pops Cereal and Milk Bar, Nestlé Heaven Milk Truffle and Pralene Perles

The Government's restrictions won't apply to older children as well until January. But even then, the programmes that they, and younger children, are most likely to watching will still be left free to advertise unhealthy foods.



Based on the viewing figures for older children during the same period, they will all have been exposed to the following ads for foods high in fat, sugar and salt.

Examples of advertisements shown during the top programmes watched by 4-15-year-olds (1-14 September 2007)

Programme and ranking	4-15-year-olds viewing (000's)	Viewing Index (only covered by controls if 120 or more)	Examples of foods high in fat, sugar or salt advertised ⁶
1. Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway	949.1	91.84	Mars, Milky Way, McDonald's Apple Pie and Toffee Sunday, Nestlé Honey Nut Cheerios and Twix
2. The X Factor	926.6	94.18	Kinder Bueno, Milky Way, Twix, Mars and Maltesers
3. New You've Been Framed!	716.8	76.06	Milky Way, Cheestrings, Nesquik Magic Straws, Kellogg's Frosties and Kellogg's Coco Pops Creations
4. Coronation Street	655.7	46.35	Milky Way, Twix, Mars, Maltesers and Nestlé Heaven Perles Praline
5. The Bill	471.1	53.49	Kinder Bueno, Milky Way, Smarties, Twix and Galaxy Minstrels
6. The Simpsons*	429.8	178.74	Covered by the Government restrictions for under tens

⁶ Based on the Food Standards Agency's nutrient profiling model



7. Emmerdale	393.7	38.09	Mars Planets, Milky Way, Twix, Galaxy Minstrels and Mars
8. Film: The Lord of the Rings - The Fellowship of the Ring	346.4	77.59	Cadbury Dairy Milk, Kellogg's Cereal and Milk Bars: Coco Pops, Rice Krispies and Frosties, Pringles Rice Infusions and Nesquik Magic Straws
9. The Queen's Christmas Message	297.7	21.98	Kellogg's Cereal and Milk Bars: Coco Pops, Rice Krispies and Frosties, Philadelphia Light Splendips Thai Sweet Chilli, Nestlé Cheerios, Kellogg's Corn Flakes
10. Supernanny	283.2	67.96	Cadbury Dairy Milk and Nesquik Magic Straws
11. Hell's Kitchen	260.4	43.27	Kinder Bueno, Mars Planets, Milky Way, Smarties and Twix
12. Who Wants To Be a Millionaire	255.7	35.64	Kinder Bueno, Milky Way, Smarties, Twix and Galaxy Minstrels
13. Animals Do The Funniest Things	246.5	66.19	Maltesers, Pringles Rice Infusions, Cheestrings, Nesquik Magic Straws and Philadelphia Light Splendips Thai Sweet Chilli
14. Film: Edward Scissorhands	210.5	118.71	Covered by Government restrictions for under tens
15. Britain's Favourite View	209.1	35.53	Werthers Original, Twix, Galaxy Minstrels, Maltesers, Toblerone Fruit and Nut and Pringles Rice Infusions



16. Film: Without a Paddle	205.2	68.85	Kellogg's Rice Krispies Squares, Kellogg's Rice Krispies and Lucozade Energy Original
17. Film: The Lord of the Rings - The Two Towers	201.3	47.71	Kellogg's Rice Krispies Squares, Kellogg's Rice Krispies and Kellogg's Corn Flakes
18. The IT Crowd	197.7	67.05	Kellogg's Cornflakes
19. Hollyoaks	189.7	100.03	Kinder Bueno, Mars Planets, Mars, Kellogg's Cereal and Milk Bar: Coco Pops, Frosties and Rice Krispies, Nestlé Heaven Milk Truffle and Praline Perles and Kellogg's Rice Krispies Squares
20. Film: Disney's Don't Look Under the Bed*	178.7	146.32	Will be covered by Government restrictions for under 16s

*These two programmes (The Simpsons and the Disney film 'Don't Look Under the Bed') are caught by the advertising restrictions and so are not allowed to show advertisements for foods high in fat, sugar and salt, based on the Food Standards Agency's nutrient profiling model.

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