

let's talk about...



The Media and Your Child

The food and tobacco industries use media to reach children. Children see tobacco and food advertisements every day on television and the Internet and in movies and magazines. Children under the age of eight do not understand that ad messages are one-sided and will likely believe their claims.

Food advertisements make up half of all ads played during children's TV shows. Most of the ads are for high-sugar or high-fat foods. Preschoolers who watch these commercials are more likely to choose these unhealthy foods. Tobacco advertisements make tobacco use seem cool, fun and common. Movies that include tobacco use rarely show its harmful effects.

The good news is that parents are a child's strongest influence. Talk with your child about advertising and how it affects people's decisions. Watch movies and advertisements with your children and talk to them about healthy food choices and the dangers of tobacco use. Be a good role model because they will copy your choices.



PESTER POWER: Children under the age of 12 influence about \$200 billion in spending a year.

In 2006, tobacco use was seen in 75 percent of youth-rated movies.

Children ages 2-7 see more advertisements for food than any other product.

Almost 75 percent of food ads seen by young children are for candy, cereal or fast food. None of the advertisements seen are for fruits or vegetables.

Every year in the United States, about 1.4 million children under 18 start smoking. Half of all new smokers start as a direct result of tobacco advertising.

Over 90 percent of 6-year-old children in one study could match a picture of a cartoon character from a tobacco company advertisement to a picture of a cigarette.

Quick Quotes

"Television advertising influences the food preferences, purchase requests, and diets, at least of children under age 12 years, and is associated with the increased rates of obesity among children and youth." — *Institute of Medicine, 2006*

"More than a third of all smoking experimentation by kids is directly associated with tobacco advertising and promotional items."
— *tobaccofreekids.org*

How Advertising Works

Advertisers know how to hook you and your kids. Start to look and you'll notice common techniques, including:

- Pictures of celebrities and cartoon characters on packages or in advertisements.
- Online kid's clubs with incentives to join and pop-up ads for free offers.
- Bright colors, loud music and catchy, easy-to-remember slogans.
- Product placement in movies and stores. Sugary cereal and tobacco advertisements in stores are placed at children's eye level.
- Implying that other children are buying the advertised product.

What You Can Do...

1. Review what your child sees from media. This includes advertisements on TV or the Internet, before movies and in children's magazines.
2. Talk with your children about what they see. Ask what they like or dislike about an advertisement or how it makes them feel. Explain that advertisers want to sell a product so their company makes money.
3. Limit screen time for TV, movies and computer or video games. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under 2, and no more than two hours a day for children over age 2. For more information, visit www.aap.org.
4. Encourage active play and games.
5. Provide books and magazines that are free of advertisements.
6. Monitor the advertisements on Internet sites they visit. Be aware that advertisements sometimes "pop-up" in a separate window.
7. Be a healthy role model for your child.

Nutrition Labels Give You the Real Facts on Food



Use the nutrition facts and ingredients to choose food products. Don't rely on pictures on the box or a company's own "health" stamp. Remember, a company's goal is to sell its product.

A cereal labeled "low-sugar" or "contains whole grains" may still include mostly sugar and refined grains. Choose 100 percent whole grain cereals instead and add sweetness with fresh or frozen fruit.

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