



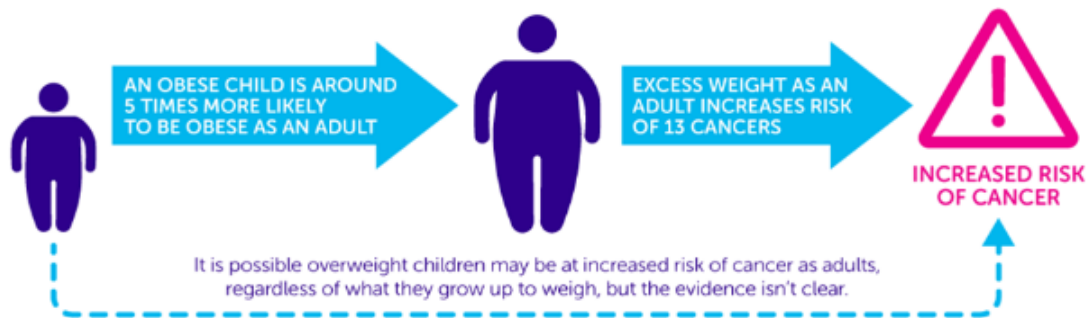
SEE IT, WANT IT, BUY IT, EAT IT

HOW FOOD ADVERTISING IS ASSOCIATED WITH
UNHEALTHY EATING BEHAVIOURS IN 7 - 11 YEAR
OLD CHILDREN

OCTOBER 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HOW DOES OBESITY IN CHILDHOOD AFFECT CANCER RISK AS AN ADULT?



CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND CANCER

Obesity is the biggest preventable cause of cancer in the UK after smoking. Being overweight or obese is associated with more than 22,000 cases of cancer each year (approx. 6% of all cancer cases)¹. Obesity is linked to 13 types of cancer, including two of the most common (bowel and post-menopausal breast) and two of the hardest to treat (oesophageal and pancreatic)¹. If current trends continue, it is estimated that there will be a further 670,000 cases of obesity-related cancer by 2035². This would cost the NHS an extra £2.5 billion per year².

In June 2018, the UK Government set a 'national ambition' to halve rates of childhood obesity by 2030³. However, in July 2018, PHE announced that levels of severe obesity in children aged 10-11 had reached an all-time high, with 1 in 25 falling into this category⁴. Importantly, children with obesity are around five times more likely to have obesity as an adult⁵, and therefore be at a higher risk of developing some cancers later in life⁶.

TV/INTERNET EXPOSURE AND UNHEALTHY EATING BEHAVIOURS IN CHILDREN

In the foreword of its updated childhood obesity plan published in June, the UK

Government recognised the difficulties parents face in providing healthy food for their children. They acknowledge both the impact of 'pester power' and the role advertising plays in encouraging these demands from their children³. Children are targeted by the advertising industry as they have a large influence over family purchases⁷.

Our research shows that children exposed to high levels of commercial advertising for junk food products high in fat, salt and/or sugar (HFSS), both on commercial TV and online, are far more likely to pester for, buy, and consume unhealthy foods.

WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENT DO?

- 1) **Update existing regulations** so that junk food advertising on TV cannot be shown until after the 9pm watershed.
- 2) **Include similar protection** for children exposed to advertising on-demand and online.
- 3) **Implement the Childhood Obesity Plan in full** - to help create an environment which supports families to make healthy choices.

KEY FINDINGS: TV

CHILDREN WHO WATCH COMMERCIAL TV FOR MORE THAN 3 HOURS PER DAY...



...are more than **twice** as likely to pester their parents for junk food



...are almost **3 times** more likely to buy junk food



...are more than **twice** as likely to eat crisps and have sugary drinks

SEE IT! PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN WATCHED ON AVERAGE 22 HOURS OF TV PER WEEK

- TV remains an important part of younger children's lives, even if they are watching slightly less than previous generations.
- In this study just over 12 hours of weekly viewing was commercial broadcasting, where children are potentially exposed to junk food and drink advertising.

BUY IT! INCREASED EXPOSURE TO ADVERTS ON TV WAS LINKED TO INCREASED BUYING OF JUNK FOOD WITH POCKET MONEY

- Each additional hour of commercial TV that children watched was associated with a 28% increased likelihood of buying junk food and drink.
- Children who watched over 3 hours of TV per day were almost 3 times more likely to buy junk food products than children who watched little or no TV, and almost 4 times more likely to buy chocolate specifically.

WANT IT! INCREASED EXPOSURE TO ADVERTS ON TV WAS LINKED TO INCREASED PESTERING OF PARENTS FOR JUNK FOOD

- Each additional hour of commercial TV that children watched was associated with a 22% increased likelihood of pestering their parents.
- Children who watched over 3 hours of TV per day were more than 2.5 times more likely to pester their parents than children who watched little or no TV.

EAT IT! INCREASED EXPOSURE TO ADVERTS ON TV WAS LINKED TO INCREASED CONSUMPTION OF JUNK FOOD

- Each additional hour of commercial TV that children watched was associated with an increased likelihood of eating sweets and crisps by 16% and of having sugary drinks by 23%.
- Children who watched over 3 hours of TV per day were more likely to eat junk food products than children who watched little or no TV, and over two and a half times as likely to have sugary drinks specifically.

Importantly, there was no link between children's physical activity levels and their exposure to commercial media on TV or the Internet. Active children were just as likely to be exposed to advertising, and just as likely to want, buy and consume junk food products.

KEY FINDINGS: INTERNET

CHILDREN WHO USE THE INTERNET FOR MORE THAN 3 HOURS PER DAY...



...are almost **3 times** more likely to pester their parents for junk food



...are almost **4 times** more likely to buy junk food



...will eat around **3 times less** fruit and vegetables

SEE IT! PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN SPENT ON AVERAGE 16 HOURS ON THE INTERNET PER WEEK

- In this study internet usage was defined as time spent online for purposes other than homework
- Average daily internet usage was 3 hours on weekdays and 4 hours on weekends. 4 out of the 5 most popular websites used by children in their free time are commercial (i.e. display ads).

BUY IT! INCREASED TIME SPENT ON THE INTERNET WAS LINKED TO INCREASED BUYING OF JUNK FOOD WITH POCKET MONEY

- Each additional hour children spent using the Internet was associated with a 33% increased likelihood of buying junk food and drink.
- Children who used the Internet for over 3 hours per day were almost 4 times more likely to buy junk food products than children who used the Internet for little or no time, and almost 7 times more likely to buy bakery items specifically.

WANT IT! INCREASED TIME SPENT ON THE INTERNET WAS LINKED TO INCREASED PESTERING OF PARENTS FOR JUNK FOOD

- Each additional hour children spent using the Internet was associated with a 19% increased likelihood of pestering their parents.
- Children who used the Internet for over 3 hours per day were almost 3 times more likely to pester their parents than children who used the Internet for little or no time.

EAT IT! INCREASED TIME SPENT ON THE INTERNET WAS LINKED TO INCREASED CONSUMPTION OF JUNK FOOD

- Each additional hour children spent using the Internet was associated with an increased likelihood of eating sweets and pastries by 12% and 13% respectively.
- Children who used the Internet for over 3 hours per day had a 68% reduction in vegetable intake and a 71% reduction in fruit intake compared with children who used the Internet for little or no time.

METHODOLOGY

Cancer Research UK commissioned Dr Emma Boyland from The University of Liverpool to investigate the impact of exposure to HFSS marketing across TV and the Internet on children's behaviour and consumption. In this study, 2471 dyads of parents and 7 – 11 year old children were surveyed to measure screen time, child purchase requests, pocket money expenditure, consumption and physical activity, as well as key demographic and anthropometric data.

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REPORT

This report should be referred to as follows:

“See it, want it, buy it, eat it: How food advertising is associated with unhealthy eating behaviours in 7 – 11 year old children”. Emma Boyland, Rosa Whalen, Paul Christiansen, Lauren McGale, Jay Duckworth, Jason Halford, Malcolm Clark, Gillian Rosenberg, Jyotsna Vohra. 2018.

CANCER RESEARCH UK

Cancer Research UK is the world's largest independent cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research. We support research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses. In 2017/2018, we spent £423 million on research institutes, hospitals and universities across the UK. We receive no funding from Government for our research.

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