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Food Marketing to Children

Children's food choices are affected by many factors, such as culture, religion, and food availability. Parents and caregivers play a significant role in children's food choices. But another key factor impacting children's food choices is food environments, including marketing of food and beverages. Food marketing attracts children's attention, influences their food choices, and prompts them to buy products. Research has shown that children see approximately 1500 ads on social media every year¹, and over 90% of food and beverage advertisements are for non-health promoting, highly processed products². This can contribute to excess consumption of sugars, saturated fats, and sodium³. During a time that kids are developing lifelong eating habits, this can pose a risk.



There are three main reasons children are vulnerable to food marketing³:

1. **They are an easily accessible audience.** They see advertisements in many different places such as online, in grocery stores, in recreation centers, on television, and at school.
2. **They are constantly targeted through various appealing ways.** For example, using cartoon characters on food packages, giving toys with the purchase of a food product or fast-food meal, and being exposed to food and beverage advertising on online games or videos, etc.
3. **Due to their developmental stage, they are more easily influenced.** Children can be easily persuaded and manipulated by advertising. In fact, children who are eight-years-old or younger have difficulty differentiating commercials from regular TV programs.

To limit children's exposure to food marketing, Canada's Food Guide recommends the following strategies³:

1. **Restrict screen time.** Many advertisements are on TV, social media, and online games. Use ad free platforms or download software that limits advertising and pop ups.
2. **Talk to kids about limiting what information they disclose on the internet.** Explain that sharing information can lead to receiving targeted ads.
3. **Encourage public funded facilities to avoid the marketing and selling of ultra-processed foods and beverages.**
4. **Educate children about marketing.** Teach them how to spot marketing strategies and how to select products based on [food labels](#) rather than solely on advertisements.

Additional strategies for childcare centers include²:

1. **Restricting food marketing in educational materials, prizes, and incentives.**
2. **Avoiding contracts with food and beverage companies that are sole-sourced.**



To learn more about food marketing and its effects on children's health and behavior, visit the [Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition](#) website and [the Heart & Stroke 2017 Report on the Health of Canadians](#).

Share with parents:

- Canada's Food Guide, [Limit Kids' Exposure to Food Marketing](#), for strategies on how to protect children from food marketing.
- Canada's Food Guide, [Marketing can influence your food choices](#), for information on food marketing and how to be aware of it.

References:

¹ [Why Marketing to Kids Must Stop - Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada](#)

² [Heart & Stroke 2017 Report on the Health of Canadians - Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada](#)

³ [Limit Kids' Exposure to Food Marketing - Canada's Food Guide](#)

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