



Nutrition for Family Living

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October, 2007 Topics

Food Ads Seen by Kids Are Dominated by Foods High in Sugar and Fat
Grocery stores respond to consumers' interest in healthier eating

Food Ads Seen by Kids Are Dominated by Foods High in Sugar and Fat

By Susan Nitzke

Analysis of TV food product advertisements during shows that are watched by children and adolescents shows that 98% of the food ads viewed by younger children (2-11 years old) were high in fat, sugar, or sodium, as were 89% of the food ads seen by adolescents (12-17). In fact, almost half of the calories in the advertised products came from sugar (46% of calories from sugar in product ads for younger children and 49% in the ads for adolescents). These data were gathered in 2003 and 2004 by a research team from the University of Illinois, Chicago who calculated that children and adolescents see an average of 18 and 10, respectively, 30-second ads per day for food products of poor nutritional content.

Implications for Extension Educators. Food ads have been found to influence children's preferences and requests. Several companies have announced changes in their media spending policies to favor healthier products. Government regulations are being considered to require this type of change. Parents, teachers, and other adults who work with children need practical advice on how to encourage healthy eating habits in spite of the powerful influence of TV food ads.

Reference:

Powell LM, Szczypka G, Chaloupka FJ, Braunschweig CL. Nutritional content of television food advertisements seen by children and adolescents in the United States. *Pediatrics* 2007;120:576-583.

Related resource:

"Fight Back Against Fat And Sugar" guest editorial in the Wisconsin State Journal by Susan Nitzke and Dave Riley, 1/3/06

<http://www.madison.com/archives/read.php?ref=/wsj/2006/01/03/0601020810.php>



Grocery stores respond to consumers' interest in healthier eating

By Gayle Coleman

Recent studies by the Food Marketing Institute indicate that consumers are watching their weight, and are trying to make healthful choices for their children and themselves. Grocery stores are responding to consumers' interests and needs in a variety of ways.

- Grab-and-go options are becoming more popular with convenience-minded consumers as an alternate to take out food. Popular options are hot and cold deli items, sandwiches, and soup and salad bars.
- Display cases that offer the components of a meal plus the recipe and nutrition information are becoming more popular. For example meat and vegetables for a stir fry might be displayed with a stir fry recipe and nutrition information.
- Precut and packaged produce items are a hit with time-stressed consumers who want to eat vegetables and fruits.
- More fresh and frozen vegetables are coming in their own steaming bags along with cooking directions.
- Consumers are buying single-serving portions of premium desserts and snack items. The 100-calorie portions of crackers, cookies and yogurt are very popular.
- A growing number of supermarkets are hiring nutrition professionals to answer consumer questions, develop products and recipes, and write newsletters.
- Supermarkets are including nutrition information, recipes and menus on their Web sites. For example, Meijer, a supermarket chain based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, takes weekly sale items and incorporates them into easy dinner menus, along with recipes, nutrition information and corresponding shopping lists.
- The Grocery Manufacturers Association/Food Products Association (FMA/FPA) launched a new in-store marketing campaign, Take a Peak.... The campaign is designed to encourage consumers to make healthier food choices in the grocery store, the point where many people decide what to eat for meals. The campaign promotes MyPyramid messages through aisle banners, wobblers (shelf tags), floor graphics, kiosks and department branding on items such as plastic bags.

Implications for Extension Educators: Although consumers are showing greater interest in health, convenience continues to be important to them. Awareness of consumers' choices can help Educators tailor materials and lessons to meet these needs and interests. Educators can plan ahead to promote MyPyramid messages when Take a Peak... comes to their communities.

Sources

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Food Marketing Institute. *Shopping for Health 2006: Making Healthy Eating Easier.* Washington, DC: Food marketing institute; 2006.

Food Marketing Institute. *U.S. Grocery Shopping Trends 2006.* Washington, DC: Food marketing Institute; 2006.

Take a Peak..., <http://www.tapintomyramid.com/>