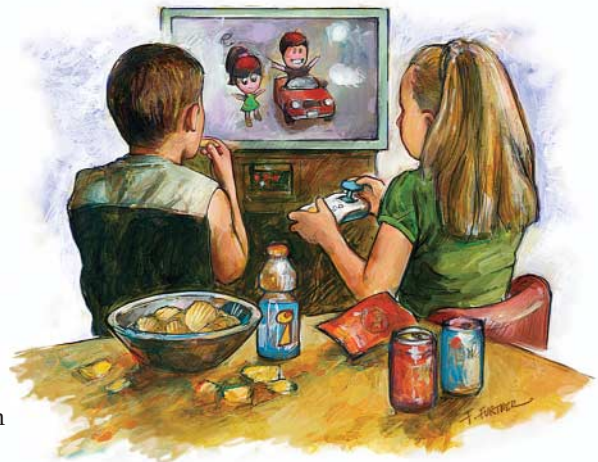


Nutrition and Media Literacy

Media, such as television, movies, and the Internet, are important sources of information for children. These media can affect children's and adolescents' attitudes and behaviors toward a number of health behaviors, including smoking, violence, and nutrition. There is concern about the impact of media food advertising to children because of links between these advertisements and the growing problem of childhood obesity.

- It is estimated that children see 7600 food commercials a year on television. Between 35% and 45% of commercials on children's television are for food. Almost all advertised food is unhealthy.
- Commercials increase preference for advertised foods and increase children's requests to parents for those foods.
- Many of these food advertisements have themes of magic and adventure. Since young children do not understand differences between fantasy and reality, they may believe that eating a certain cereal will give them magical powers.



3 WAYS IN WHICH PARENTS CAN MODERATE THEIR CHILDREN'S MEDIA USE

Reduce Your Child's Media Use

- One way to reduce the impact of media on your child's nutrition choices is to reduce the time your child spends interacting with media. This can benefit your child by decreasing the unhealthy messages that media, such as television, can send, as well as giving more time for your child to do other healthy activities, such as playing outside or time spent with friends.
- Avoid having a television in your child's room or watching television during meals.

Media Literacy

- Media literacy means teaching young people how to understand and interpret advertisements.
- Parents can talk to their children about what advertisements they see and how that ad may influence their choices. This interaction helps children understand that not everything seen in the media is real and how media advertisements try to influence behaviors.
- There is evidence that media literacy may protect against some behaviors that the media promote, such as smoking.

Countermarketing

- This technique refers to promoting healthy messages through the media.
- Examples include advertisements for healthy foods and games that promote healthy behaviors.
- In a research study in this month's *Archives*, a group of children were shown a video game, known as an "advergame" (because of the mix of game and advertising), that promoted healthy foods. The researchers found that these children who saw the advergame were more likely to choose a healthy food when offered a snack.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

http://www.cmch.tv/mentors_parents/overweight.asp

INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and other Advice for Patients articles, go to the Advice for Patients link on the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* Web site at <http://www.archpediatrics.com>.

Source: <http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/overweight.cfm>.

Megan A. Moreno, MD, MEd, MPH, Writer

Fred Furtner, Illustrator

Frederick P. Rivara, MD, MPH, Editor

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