



CAP Consultation: food and soft drink advertising to children

Introduction

The Faculty of Dental Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee of Advertising Practice's (CAP's) consultation on food and soft drink advertising to children. While we understand the emphasis on the need to prevent childhood obesity, given the impact of sugar on tooth decay, the restriction of advertising of high sugar products to children would also have great potential to improve their oral health, which is in a concerning state.

Impact of sugar on oral health

We published the report, [The state of children's oral health in England](#), to highlight the poor rates of oral health across the country. Almost a quarter of five-year-olds in England¹ suffer from tooth decay and it is by far the most common cause of hospital admissions among five- to nine-year-olds.² In some cases children are being admitted for multiple tooth extractions under general anaesthetic. The situation is particularly concerning considering tooth decay is largely preventable through moderate sugar consumption, regular brushing, adequate exposure to fluoride and routine visits to the dentist.

Support for the CAP proposals

Therefore the Faculty strongly supports the CAP proposals to introduce tougher restrictions on the advertising of food and soft drink products by using the Department of Health nutrient profiling model to identify HFSS products.

We point to the systematic review that has found exposure to unhealthy food advertising is associated with greater food intake in children, but not adults.³ Several studies have associated television food advertising with an increase in children's snacking, and the consumption of energy-dense snacks in particular.⁴ A review by the Food Standards Agency found that an advert for a specific brand of junk food will make a person more likely to buy that brand, but also more likely to buy that kind of junk food in general.⁵ This suggests that restrictions on advertising have the potential to reduce the amount of sugar children consume, thereby improving both their general and oral health.

¹ Public Health England. 2014/15 Survey of 5 year old children. Published May 2016.

² Hospital Episode Statistics (provisional), Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2013. Data provided after FOI request.

³ Boyland et al. 2016. Advertising as a cue to consume: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of acute exposure to unhealthy food and nonalcoholic beverage advertising on intake in children and adults. *Am J Clin Nutr* February 2016; 103: 519-533.

⁴ British Heart Foundation (2014). Policy Statement. Unhealthy food and drink marketing to children.

⁵ Hastings et al (2003) Review of the research on the effects of food promotion to children. Food Standards Agency.