

Out of place: the extent of unhealthy foods in prime locations in supermarkets

Obesity Health Alliance, November 2018

Report methodology

The aim of this survey was to collect data on the types of food and drink products located at prominent locations within five individual supermarkets.

The five stores surveyed were outlets from supermarket chains with the biggest market share in the UK¹:

- Tesco – Brook Green, London
- Sainsburys – North Cheam, Greater London
- Asda – Birmingham
- Morrisons – Birkenhead
- Aldi – West Ewell, Surrey

The data was collected during a single visit to each store by volunteers from Obesity Health Alliance (OHA) member organisations. All data was collected between 27 July and 23 August 2018.

Data was collected from five areas in the supermarket. These were based on locations identified in chapter 2 of the Government's childhood obesity plan.²

- Store entrance – within 10 metres of store entrance.
- Gondola ends that face onto the main central aisle. This included the fruit and vegetable aisles.
- One trolley checkout.
- Self checkouts area.
- Free standing display units (including ladder racks).

Volunteers recorded data in a template provided by the Obesity Health Alliance (OHA). This ensured that data was collected consistently across each of the locations. The template recorded; the location of the product, the brand of the product, the product name, and whether the product had an associated price promotion. Those conducting the survey were also encouraged to take photographs of examples of place promotions if they felt comfortable doing so data entry could be cross checked independently.

For each of locations surveyed, only data for food and drink products that were physically available to pick up was recorded. Adverts or signage featuring products were not recorded. Alcoholic drinks were also excluded from this analysis.

¹ 22nd August 2017. BBC News. Lidl tops Waitrose to become UK's seventh biggest grocer.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-41011259>

² 25th June 2018. Department of Health and Social Care. Childhood obesity: a plan for action, chapter 2.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action-chapter-2>

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Analysis

Each product was coded based on its inclusion in Public Health England's sugar reduction programme or its likely inclusion in the calorie reduction programme based on PHE's draft guidance. Drinks were included in the analysis if they are subject to the Soft Drinks Industry Levy.

Sugar reduction categories:^{3&4}

- Breakfast cereals
- Yoghurts
- Biscuits
- Cakes
- Morning goods
- Puddings
- Ice cream, lollies and sorbets
- Chocolate confectionery
- Sweet confectionery
- Sweet spreads and sauces
- Juice based drinks
- Milk based drinks

Calorie reduction categories⁵:

- Bread with additions
- Crisps, savoury and other snacks
- Savoury biscuits, crackers and crispbreads
- Potato, polenta and other products
- Meat products (e.g. burgers, sausages, kebabs)
- Cooking and serving sauces and pastes
- Table sauces and dressings
- Pasta/rice/noodles/ other cereals with additions
- Ready meals & meal centres including chicken burgers, breaded chicken/fish, meat alternatives etc
- Pizza
- Meal accompaniments, side dishes etc
- Egg products and dishes
- Pastry pies (meat/fish/vegetable/meat alternatives)

³ 30th March 2017. Public Health England. Sugar reduction: Achieving the 20%.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-achieving-the-20>

⁴ 22nd May 2018. Public Health England. Sugar reduction: juice and milk based drinks.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-juice-and-milk-based-drinks>

⁵ Summary table of guidelines. Circulated to attendees at PHE calorie reduction stakeholder meetings.

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Soft Drinks guidelines⁶:

A drink is subject to the Soft Drinks Industry Levy if it meets all of the following conditions:

- It has had sugar added during production, or anything (other than fruit juice, vegetable juice and milk) that contains sugar, such as honey
- It contains at least 5 grams (g) of sugar per 100 millilitres (ml) in its ready to drink or diluted form
- It's either ready to drink, or to be drunk it must be diluted with water, mixed with crushed ice or processed to make crushed ice, mixed with carbon dioxide, or a combination of these
- It's bottled, canned or otherwise packaged so it's ready to drink or be diluted
- It has a content of 1.2% alcohol by volume (abv) or less

The complete data is available in appendix 2.

Limits of the survey

The calorie reduction programme is under development at the time of data analysis so products were coded based on information available. There may be instances where products coded as included in the calorie reduction programme category are not subsequently included when the programme is launched.

Due to being conducted within the summer, there will be a seasonal bias concerning the types of food on promotion.

This survey provides a snapshot of the type of food and drinks promoted in prominent locations seen on a single visit and does not provide a comprehensive review of each retailer's approach to promotions.

Contributors

The data was analysed and report written by Caroline Cerny and Rebecca Stacey at the Obesity Health Alliance.

Thanks to Tom Embury (British Dietetic Association), Alex Holt (Food Active) and Dan Parker (Living Loud) for collecting the data.

Thanks to Jake Harrison and Malcolm Clark (Cancer Research UK) for reviewing and contributions to the report.

About the Obesity Health Alliance

The Obesity Health Alliance is a coalition of over 40 leading health charities, medical royal colleges and campaign groups working together to tackle obesity. The goal of the OHA is to prevent obesity-related ill-health by addressing the influences that lead to excess bodyweight throughout life. We bring together a range of leading organisations with expertise in overweight and obesity. The OHA

⁶ 3rd April 2018. HM Revenue and Customs. Check if your drink is liable for the Soft Drinks Industry Levy. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-your-drink-is-liable-for-the-soft-drinks-industry-levy>

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was formed in 2015. We support policy-making to address the social, economic and cultural factors that contribute to obesity and the inequalities in health caused by obesity.