

The need for a comprehensive 9pm watershed on all junk food adverts shown on all types of media

Junk food adverts and the link to childhood obesity

- A strong body of evidence shows that there is a clear link between food advertising and the food children choose.¹ Advertising influences the type of food children choose, how much of it they eat,² and can lead to them 'pestering' parents to buy unhealthy products.^{3,4}
- A recent meta-analysis found that exposure to just 4.4 minutes of food advertising increases a child's food consumption by 60kcal. Children with overweight or obesity are more vulnerable to the influence of advertising, consuming an average of 45.6kcal more than children with healthy weight after seeing food advertising.⁵
- One 2018 study from Cancer Research UK found that children who can recall seeing unhealthy food and drink adverts on television every day are more than twice as likely to have obesity.⁶

The current rules do not protect children

- Current TV regulations do not cover 'family viewing time', between 6-9pm, which is when the shows most frequently watched by children are aired, such as 'Britain's Got Talent', watched by over 1.4 million children and 'Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway'⁷ watched by over 1.1 million children.
- A 2016 analysis by University of Liverpool and the Obesity Health Alliance found almost 60% of food and drink adverts shown during family viewing time were for food and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt which would be banned from children's TV channels. In the worst case example, nine unhealthy food adverts were shown before and during a single episode of 'Hollyoaks', watched by over 140,000 children.⁸
- The current rules only apply online when children make up more than 25% of the audience compared to adults. This means they do not apply to online content popular with both adults and children such as YouTube vloggers who frequently have over a million subscribers under 18.

¹ Public Health England (October 2015). Sugar Reduction: the evidence for action

² Boyland E, Nolan S, Kelly B (2016). Advertising as a cue to consume: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of acute exposure to unhealthy food and non alcoholic beverage advertising on intake in children and adults *Am J Clin Nutr*

³ Hastings, G. (2006). The extent, nature and effects of food promotion to children: a review of the evidence. WHO 16.

⁴ McDermott L et al. (2006). International food advertising, pester power and its effects. *International Journal of Advertising*.

⁵ Russell SG, Croker H, Viner RM (2018). The effect of screen advertising on children's dietary intake: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Obesity Reviews*.

⁶ Cancer Research UK. (2018) A Prime Time for Action: new evidence on the link between television and on demand marketing and obesity.

⁷ Ofcom (2018). Children and parents: media use and attitudes report

⁸ Obesity Health Alliance. (2017). A Watershed Moment: Why it's Prime-Time to Reduce Children's Exposure to Junk Food Advertising.

What is the solution?

- We want a comprehensive 9pm watershed to apply to all adverts showing food and drink products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) to apply to all types of media. This includes:
 - Live TV and radio shows
 - TV and radio accessed 'on-demand' or catch-up services when the service is accessed pre-9pm on the content watched was originally shown live before 9pm.
 - Online, including websites, social media, apps and games
 - Outdoor digital poster adverts (such as at bus-stops, roadsides etc)

How will this protect children?

- A 9pm watershed is an existing concept designed to protect children from unsuitable content on TV and provides a clear cut-off point for parents. After 9pm, children's exposure to junk food advertising will be at parents' discretion, giving control back to parents.
- Applying a 9pm watershed on all types of junk food adverts, regardless of whether they are designed to specifically appeal to children, if they are shown when children are most likely to be exposed to them, on all types of media channels and devices will ensure that advertising revenue cannot simply be displaced to other types of media. This will provide comprehensive protection to children both inside and outside of home.

Public support:

- There is strong public support for comprehensive measures to protect children from junk food marketing across all media.⁹
 - 69% of people agree that children seeing junk food marketing contributes to childhood obesity
 - 72% support a 9pm watershed on junk food adverts during popular family TV shows
 - 70% support a 9pm watershed on junk food adverts online
 - 68% support a 9pm watershed on junk food adverts in digital advertising outside of the home (e.g. cinemas, digital posters at bus stops/ on roadsides)
- A comprehensive 9pm watershed on junk food adverts across TV and all digital devices is supported by Obesity Health Alliance members, Obesity Action Scotland, Jamie Oliver and leading academics specialising in marketing to children from the University of Liverpool and the Open University.

The Obesity Health Alliance:

The Obesity Health Alliance is a coalition of over 40 leading charities, medical royal colleges and campaign groups working together to influence national policy by calling for evidence-based measures to reduce obesity.

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⁹ All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2078 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 12th - 13th February 2019. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).