

YOU CANNOT RUN AWAY FROM TV: CHILDHOOD OBESITY PERPETUATED
BY ADVERTISEMENTS, REGARDLESS OF EXERCISE HABITS

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Abstract

There is evidence suggesting that food advertising causes childhood obesity. The strength of this effect is unclear. This study attempts to estimate how much of the childhood obesity prevalence is attributable to unethically constructed food advertisements on television (TV), and argues that watching child-oriented TV, with regularly programmed advertisements, is the most impactful predictor of childhood obesity. A survey was distributed to parents of 5- to 13-year-old US children, asking information about their children's TV watching habits, eating and exercise habits, height and weight, as well as many other questions. Model input was based on body measurements from the survey, the CDC-2015 cut-offs for weight categories, and literature that relates advertising to consumption and consumption to body mass. The model predicts that reducing the exposure of general TV watching per week by 1 hour would decrease the average logged BMI by 4.6%. If one were to exclusively watch commercial free child-oriented programming (Netflix for example), the model predicts a drop in logBMI of .02% with every additional hour. Several variables were controlled for including: exercise per day, age of child, child and adult-directed TV per day (hours), commercial free TV per week (hours), fruits consumed per week, vegetables consumed per week, sweets consumed per week, soft-drinks consumed per week and socioeconomic status. This study suggests that a healthier TV choice is one that is entirely free of unethically manufactured advertisements. If corporations were to limit exposing children to the marketing of their energy dense, high sugar and sodium products, this could contribute significantly to making children's diets healthier.

KEYWORDS: (Childhood Obesity, Food Advertising, CSR, Exercise)

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ON MY HONOR, I HAVE NEITHER GIVEN NOR RECEIVED
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