



## Advertising of Unhealthy Foods and Beverages to Children

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### BCH Role

Ballarat Community Health works in partnership with the community to create opportunities and supportive environments which empower people to achieve the best possible health and wellbeing. Advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages has been associated with an increased risk of overweight and obesity in children<sup>1</sup>. Childhood overweight and obesity is likely to continue into adulthood which increases the risk of developing conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease<sup>2</sup>. Ballarat Community Health's role is to advocate for restrictions on the advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages to children, and to support relevant campaigns from networks and organisations such as Parents' Voice, Diabetes Victoria, Cancer Council Australia, VicHealth and YMCA Victoria.

### Key Messages

- In Victoria 27% of children are overweight or obese<sup>3</sup>, and in City of Ballarat 61% of adults are overweight or obese<sup>4</sup>.
- Research shows that children are exposed to high levels of food advertising, most of which is for unhealthy foods and beverages high in fat, sugar and/or salt<sup>5</sup>.
- Children's exposure to high levels of unhealthy food advertising is one factor that affects the foods and beverages that children like, ask for, buy and consume<sup>5</sup>.
- There is a range of ways that children are exposed to unhealthy food advertising including television advertisements, on-pack promotions (e.g. competitions and giveaways), advertisements in children's magazines, online and interactive games<sup>5</sup>.
- Sport sponsorship is a significant form of unhealthy food and beverage advertising. While sponsorship may be an important source of funding for sport, sponsorship by manufacturers of these products can undermine the health promoting goals of sport<sup>5</sup>.
- Unhealthy food advertising (including sport sponsorship) may establish and reinforce unhealthy eating habits in children which can last throughout life<sup>5</sup>.
- The World Health Organization recommends restrictions of unhealthy food and beverage advertising in settings where children gather including schools, playgrounds, children's services, sporting and cultural activities<sup>6</sup>.
- In Australia self-regulatory initiatives introduced by the food industry in 2009 have not reduced children's exposure to unhealthy food and beverage advertising on television<sup>7</sup>, and there are currently no regulations to limit children's exposure through sport sponsorship<sup>5</sup>.

- More fast food restaurants are located in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas<sup>8</sup>. Victoria's current planning system gives local councils very limited control over the location and density of fast food restaurants<sup>8</sup>.
- Ballarat Community Health supports the introduction of tougher restrictions to protect children from unhealthy food and beverage advertising to enable them to grow up in an environment that encourages healthy eating.
- The Achievement Program is a comprehensive framework designed to help create healthy places where people work, learn and play with a particular focus on creating healthier environments where children and young people spend a lot of their time. Ballarat Community Health provides support to early childhood services and schools working through the Achievement Program.

## References

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