

Portion Sizes and School-Age Children

The Marketing of Supersize to Kids

Children today eat out often and are coaxed through attractive advertising to order "supersizes" or "supervalues." Providing children with more food than is necessary for them to consume is one of the factors that contributes to overweight and obesity. Obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in teens over the last 20 years.

Advertising and the food industry

- In 1999 corporations spent approximately \$12 billion on marketing to children.
- Advertisers appeal directly to parents AND teach kids to influence their parents' purchases.
- The food industry links food with entertainment and toys instead of with growth and health.
- In the 1970s, children received about 2% of their total caloric intake from fast food.
- In the 1990s children received about 10% of their total caloric intake from fast food.
- A single "supersized" meal can provide more calories than most children need for an entire day.

Product placement is everywhere

- Products are marketed through television, radio, print media, coupons, films and books.
- Soft drink companies have pouring rights contracts in schools.
- Fast food chains sell food in school and hospital cafeterias.
- The in-school television network Channel One has advertising.
- Computer-literate kids are used as research subjects through online panels and chat rooms.

Health consequences of overweight and obesity on children

- Type 2 diabetes is no longer called "adult onset" because rates are increasing in children.
- 60% of overweight children also have hyperlipidemia, elevated blood pressure or increased insulin levels.
- Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults (80% if one or more parent is overweight or obese).
- Body image and other emotional problems such as eating disorders.
- Early maturation, orthopedic problems, sleep apnea.
- Psychosocial problems such as discrimination, depression and anxiety.

Solutions

- Stick with small meals - teach your kids how and why to say NO to supersizing.
- Order healthful alternatives such as a small hamburger, salad, potato or frozen yogurt.
- Ask for healthy options such as juice, water or milk instead of soda.
- Recognize that online marketing sites are NOT educational for children.
- Realize that fast food chains are not good sources of "educational materials."
- Advocate for school policies that restrict advertising, pouring rights and fast food chains in cafeterias.