

# TRENDS IN TELEVISION FOOD ADVERTISING TO YOUNG PEOPLE: 2010 UPDATE

## Executive Summary

In 2010, there was a dramatic reversal of the progress previously observed in reducing children's exposure to food, beverage, and restaurant advertising on television. From 2004 to 2008, exposure had declined by 12%; however, in 2010, children viewed 9% more food and beverage advertisements on television compared to 2008 - on average, 13.4 television food ads every day. Adolescent exposure to television food advertising also increased by 11%, averaging 16.2 food ads per day, and representing the highest level of exposure seen in the past nine years.

Examination of exposure to advertising for individual food categories did reveal some positive changes in 2010. Children viewed fewer ads for sweet snacks and crackers/savory snacks; advertising for these two primarily unhealthy categories declined by 26% and 18% respectively from 2008. In addition, young people's exposure to advertising for fruits and vegetables doubled, although these ads continued to account for less than 1% of all food ads seen.

Exposure to advertising for other primarily unhealthy products, however, increased substantially. Children and adolescents viewed more than twice as many advertisements for candy products in 2010 compared to 2008. For children, candy became the second most often viewed food and beverage product advertisement (exceeded only by cereals). Youth exposure to carbonated beverage ads also increased by more than two-thirds. In addition, restaurant advertising viewed by children increased by 8%; even though advertising viewed by adults increased by just 2%.

These findings demonstrate that current industry self-regulation through the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative has not substantially shifted the mix of food advertising to children to more nutritious products. In addition, they suggest that many companies are not fully committed to reducing child exposure to advertising for their least nutritious products.

## Background

This analysis updates the Rudd Report, *Trends in television food advertising: Progress in reducing unhealthy marketing to young people?* (available at [http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/reports/RuddReport\\_TVFoodAdvertising\\_2.10.pdf](http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/reports/RuddReport_TVFoodAdvertising_2.10.pdf)). The previous report documented trends in food advertisements viewed by children, adolescents, and adults from 2002 through 2008. As in the previous report, gross ratings points (GRP) data were obtained from Nielsen. These are the same data used by advertisers to measure the reach and frequency of their advertising campaigns. We licensed data for 2010 and used the methods from the previous report to assess youth exposure to food advertising in 2010 in total and by product category, as well as changes in exposure from 2004. The Appendix provides detailed GRP data by age group and food category for 2002 through 2010.

## Changes in youth exposure to food advertising on television: 2004 to 2010

As reported in our previous study, children's exposure to all food advertising on television peaked in 2004 - when the average child (aged 2-11) viewed 14.0 food ads per day - and then declined by 12% to 12.3 ads viewed per day in 2008. However, 2010 saw a dramatic reversal of this positive trend (see Figure 1). In 2010, the average child viewed 13.4 food ads per day, an increase of 9% from 2008 and just 4% fewer than the 14.0 ads per day viewed in 2004.

Adolescent exposure to television food advertising in 2010 increased by 11% compared to 2008; the average teen (aged 12-17) viewed 16.2 food ads viewed per day. This increase followed a comparable 11% increase from 2007 to 2008. Adolescents viewed 3.0 additional food ads per day in 2010 compared to

