

Advertising Child's Play

10 December 2008

(PhysOrg.com) -- Children on their way to school are five times more likely to see the advertising of soft drinks, alcohol, ice-cream and confectionary than ads for healthy foods.

This was a finding of research published in the December issue of the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health.

Bridget Kelly and her colleagues from the NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity looked at the prevalence of food advertising in areas around primary schools.

They found that 80% of the advertising was for non-core foods, those that are energy dense and nutrient poor.

"Advertising is known to influence children's food choices," Ms Kelly said.

"These advertisements challenge healthy-eating messages and they could potentially contribute to poor diets."

The most frequently recorded advertisements were for sugar-sweetened drinks, followed by alcoholic beverages and coffee. The highest proportion of advertisements were found in the areas closest to primary schools, with twice as many advertisements in these areas compared to those further away.

Alcoholic beverages were the single most advertised product within a 250m radius of primary schools.

"This may be especially influential because of children's repetitive exposure to these advertisements," Ms Kelly said.

"The high frequency of non-core food advertisements points to the need for policy intervention.

"Outdoor food advertising appears to be an

important mechanism for food marketers to target children and should be considered in future debates on food marketing to children."

This paper is published in The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health (Vol. 32, Issue 6).

Provided by Wiley

APA citation: Advertising Child's Play (2008, December 10) retrieved 18 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-12-advertising-child.html>

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