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Time to can fast food marketing targeting teens

VicHealth and the Obesity Policy Coalition are calling for higher standards on fast food marketing to teenagers and children after new research has revealed how unhealthy food and drink ads manipulate teens into buying their products.

The [research from the University of Michigan](#) found teenagers were particularly susceptible to unhealthy food ads, which targeted the reward centres of their brains leading to increased consumption of fast food.

The study also found that fast food ads for healthier options, like salads, still used branding and logos associated with predominantly unhealthy foods. This led to teens craving the unhealthy fries and burgers associated with the brand, rather than the healthy food in the ads.

In response to the research VicHealth Executive Manager of Programs Kirstan Corben is calling for greater protection for kids and teens from the predatory tactics of unhealthy food marketers.

“This research shows the impact unhealthy food and drink marketing is having on vulnerable kids and teenagers,” Ms Corben said.

“Fast food advertising is rampant and incessant, and this research shows how it leads to kids’ eating more unhealthy food.

“These companies spend millions on advertising, promotions and sponsorships and they do it because it leads to more kids and teenagers eating their unhealthy products.

“It’s time we put our kids’ health above the profits of the unhealthy food industry.”

Obesity Policy Coalition Executive Manager Jane Martin said it was time to set higher standards for how the food industry markets and sells the food we eat to our kids.

“With over a quarter of Victorian kids above a healthy weight we want to see higher standards for marketing to kids and teenagers,” Ms Martin said.

“We want to see a restriction on unhealthy food and drink advertising during peak viewing times for kids on television and social media, restrictions to make sport and major community events free from unhealthy food and drink sponsorship, and mandatory regulation to stop unhealthy advertising in government owned spaces like train and bus stations.

“Government controls have been introduced in other countries, such as Chile – we should also be ensuring that we protect our kids from the unhealthy influence of the food and drink industry.”

Kirstan Corben, VicHealth Executive Manager of Programs and Jane Martin Executive Manager Obesity Policy Coalition are available to comment.

To arrange an interview call VicHealth Principal Media Advisor Rachel Murphy on 0435 761 732.

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