



Health Program

Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative

Public Awareness and Marketing

The food industry spends billions of dollars each year marketing products to American consumers. According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM), as much as \$10 billion per year is spent just to market food to children. A number of large food and beverage companies, both individually and as part of larger initiatives, have recently made voluntary commitments to reduce their marketing to children, and/or sought to improve the nutritional quality of their product offerings. While these efforts are to be applauded, too many advertising messages – including those directed to children – continue to promote unhealthy foods. At the same time, research shows that many people have difficulty interpreting the health-related claims that are often used to market food, either as part of food packaging or in advertisements.

To communicate clear, consistent messages about the importance of healthy diet and physical activity and to provide consumers with the information to make healthier choices, action should be taken using new marketing and media outlets, going beyond TV, print, radio and the internet to include emerging social media, kid-directed games, product packaging, and digital media advertising.

RECOMMENDATION: THE FOOD INDUSTRY SHOULD ADOPT UNIFORM STANDARDS FOR WHAT CONSTITUTES “BETTER FOR YOU” FOODS USING THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE PHASE 2 REPORT AS A STARTING POINT AND MAKING SURE INDUSTRY STANDARDS ARE ALIGNED WITH THE U.S. DIETARY GUIDELINES.

We also call for an independent entity to monitor and evaluate the impact the industry’s voluntary “Facts up Front” proposal is having on consumer choice, with the goal of measuring whether consumers are using this information to change their purchasing and consumption behaviors.





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RECOMMENDATION: THE AD COUNCIL OR SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD COORDINATE A MULTIMEDIA CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE HEALTHY DIET AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, FUNDED BY LEADING PRIVATE SECTOR COMPANIES IN COLLABORATION WITH FEDERAL AGENCIES.

For both the nutrition and physical activity aspects of the campaign, high profile and influential messengers are critical. We recommend involving celebrities, athletes and other public figures who resonate with audiences and have the ability to inspire change.

RECOMMENDATION: FOOD RETAILERS SHOULD ADOPT IN-STORE MARKETING AND PRODUCT PLACEMENT STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE THE PURCHASE OF HEALTHIER, LOWER CALORIE PRODUCTS.

RECOMMENDATION: STATES AND LOCALITIES SHOULD CONTINUE TO INNOVATE AND EXPERIMENT WITH WAYS TO CHANGE THE PROFILE OF FOODS IN THE MARKETPLACE.

As part of ongoing efforts in this area, additional information generated by states and localities about the impact that different state policies and local ordinances are having on food choices, portion sizes and other factors – for the general population and for children in particular – would be a useful contribution to existing research in the field.

