

Article #2 – Teens and the Media



Vocabulary: influence, media, consume, advertisement

Television, newspapers, radio, and the Internet are part of the media. The media greatly influences the choices teens make using advertisements. Teens watch 40,000 ads a year on television alone. Additionally, the more television minutes they watch, the more calories they consume. Moreover, the snacks they consume while watching television are often less healthful choices.

The marketers of food and beverages know teens are a captive audience. They develop their ads to appeal to them. These ads affect the food and beverage choices teens make. It works like this. Teens watch ads on television. Let's use an ad for an energy drink as an example. The energy drink is mostly empty calories and has little nutritional value. But, the ad makes it look delicious. Teens want the energy drink. They ask their parents to buy it.

The media influences what we buy.

Parents have the greatest influence over whether teens eat healthy foods. However, media and advertising also greatly influences what teens *want* to eat. As a result, the media can undermine parental influences, helping to fuel the epidemic of childhood obesity.

To counteract the influence of the media, health professionals recommend four actions. First, teach youth to be critical of the media they see so they can separate “good” from “bad” media. Second, set limits on television viewing and do not allow television in the bedroom. Third, educate youth about the influence of media and advertising. Finally, use the same powerful techniques exerted by the media to promote good food choices in teens.

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