

Q: What is unopposed marketing of unhealthy foods?

Addressing unopposed marketing of unhealthy foods is about taking concrete actions to restrict exposure to marketing of foods that are high in fat, sugar or salt and promoting healthy food options. Actions to achieve this are needed in the areas of legislation, literacy and social mobilization.

Q: What is the link between marketing and childhood obesity?

Marketing refers to any form of commercial communication or message that is designed to, or has the effect of, increasing the recognition, appeal and/or consumption of particular products and services. It comprises anything that acts to advertise or otherwise promote a product or service.

Evidence shows that most food advertising to children is for food high in fat, salt and sugar and influences children's food preferences, purchase requests and consumption patterns, which results in an increase in consumption not only of the product of a given brand, but also of all the products of the category in question (1). For instance, children tend to prefer one brand of fizzy sugary drinks to another if they see an advertisement for the former and will also increase their consumption of fizzy sugary drinks to the detriment of other categories of drinks such as water, milk or fruit juices.

A lack of action to restrict the marketing of unhealthy foods leads to the promotion of unhealthy diets and childhood overweight and obesity.

Q: What are the most commonly used marketing techniques in the Region?

The most commonly used marketing techniques in the Region include television and online advertising; product placement and branding; sponsorship; direct marketing; product design and packaging; and point-of-sale.

Q: How has unopposed marketing of unhealthy food affected children in the Region?

In the Region, child obesity is on the rise. The overindulgence in high calorie food and indoor leisure activities, such as watching television, surfing the net and playing computer games, all contribute to childhood obesity. Regionally, overweight and obesity in children under-5 years of

age has increased from 5.8% to 8.1% between 1990 and 2012, which is above the global average of 6.7%. Overweight and obesity in adolescents (13–15 years) are highly prevalent (2).

Q: What is the role of WHO in supporting countries to counter the unopposed marketing of unhealthy foods?

Regulating marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children is one of the strategic interventions as part of the prevention and reduction of risk factors in the Regional framework for action (3). In addition, WHO is working within the Global strategy on diet, physical activity and health and closely with governments to meet nine global targets to reduce noncommunicable diseases and give us all a better chance at a longer, healthier life by 2025 (2,4). The third global target is a 10% relative reduction in prevalence of insufficient physical activity.

Q: What are specific examples of how WHO has supported countries to counter the unopposed marketing of unhealthy foods?

Five countries now have food-based dietary guidelines, while a nutrition profiling model was developed and is being tested in seven countries to help them to improve food labelling and promote healthy food. Training is being developed, in collaboration with the University of Liverpool, on the regulation of marketing of foods high in salt, sugar and fat. The aim is to enhance capacity in Member States for implementing the WHO recommendations on marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children.

In addition, an initiative to counter the unopposed marketing of unhealthy products, especially to children, was announced during the 62nd Regional Committee session and will be launched shortly. Lastly, WHO worked with global experts to develop a draft roadmap to counteract unregulated and unopposed marketing of unhealthy products (5).

References

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[3. Regional framework for action. In WHO/Noncommunicable diseases. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean; 2015](#)

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[5. The Work of WHO in the Eastern Mediterranean Region Annual Report of the Regional Director 2014. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean; 2015](#)

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