

# Teen Health and the Media

Tobacco Alcohol & Other Drugs Teen Sexuality Violence ▶ Body Image & Nutrition



## Body Image & Nutrition

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The marketing of junk food and fast food has become big business—some have called the food industry the next Tobacco. Companies spend top dollar on advertising to make us keenly aware of their products. Pepsi spends an estimated \$2.1 billion a year on marketing, McDonald's \$1.2 billion, and Coca-Cola is not far behind at \$895 million. The aggressive advertising is working—Americans spent \$110 billion on fast food in 2001 and consumed 56 gallons of soda per person (that's 600 hundred 12-ounce cans!).



The average child watches 10,000 food advertisements per year on television; most are for junk food and fast food—only 2% are for fruits, vegetables, or beans. Advertisements for junk food and fast food can also be seen in magazines, movies (through product placement), stores, the Internet, and even schools. What impact is this having on youth? Recent statistics indicate that 14% of children are now seriously overweight. 60% of overweight children between the ages of 5-10 years of age already have at least one risk factor for heart disease, including elevated blood cholesterol, blood pressure or increased insulin, and type 2 diabetes.

However, today's youth, particularly girls, get mixed messages from the media. On one hand, they are bombarded daily with advertisements for junk food and fast food on television and magazines, yet the same magazines and television shows that serve up these ads also celebrate the waif look by portraying pencil-thin models. This has created a state of confusion and potential danger for many young women (and men). The National Eating Disorders Association estimates that 81% of 10-year-olds are afraid of being fat and between "5-10 million girls and women and 1 million boys and men are struggling with eating disorders including anorexia, bulimia, binge eating disorder, or borderline conditions."

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