



# The Wolfe Clinic News

## Stop Child Abuse "Junk The Junk Food"

You walk through the entrance to the grocery store, planning to buy only the few items on your list. You're just inside the door when your young child begins to beg for a junk food item sitting in a colorful display box. You give in hoping it will make the rest of the trip easier, when just halfway down the first isle your child begins begging for another junk food item. Sound familiar?

Well, there's a reason why your kids want just about every salty, sugary, greasy, processed food that they see. Your child has been exposed to very effective marketing, through the Internet, TV, magazines, the radio and even school. They have been swamped with the persuasive messages of the junk food industry. According to the National Institute on Media and the Family, advertisements target children as young as 3 years old. As an adult it can be difficult to resist these marketing ploys, but for a child to resist is almost impossible.

Junk food marketers spent an estimated \$15 billion in 2002 on marketing aimed at children. They seek to push their empty foods into the minds of children so that they in turn pester their parents to buy the products. Of course, the ultimate decision of whether



you to understand how your children are influenced by these unhealthy messages.

### Marketing Techniques Aimed At Children

#### Athletes/Celebrities

Companies use celebrities and athletes to promote less-than-nutritious products. Many children see stars and athletes as role models and feel that the products they endorse are worthwhile. They listen to these messages because they like the messengers. Unfortunately, the underlying message to kids (aside from the obvious "buy this product") is that eating these products can make them a celebrity or athlete or at least will make them look and perform like one. And even if that doesn't happen, they still feel that the products are worthwhile since they're popular among

to purchase junk food is up to you, the parent, but becoming conscious of some of the most obtrusive methods junk food marketers use will help

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the people they look up to and respect.

## Saturday Morning Commercials

Saturday morning cartoons are a tradition for many children. Not surprisingly, junk food marketers have claimed their space among the cartoons--90 percent of food commercials aired on Saturday morning kids' TV shows are for products of low nutritional value such as sugary cereals, candy and fast food. Placing the ads among children's cartoons is not enough for some of these companies, many of the junk foods will even feature a cartoon character or cartoon theme as part of their packaging and promotional angle.

So don't be too surprised that when you head to the grocery store, your child's mind will be thoroughly saturated with junk food items he wants you to buy. Of course, this is when you as the parent must be strong and only buy foods that you will feel good about your child eating.

## School Vending Machines

You send your child to school with a healthy lunch in hand, but your efforts are soon sabotaged by junk food marketers where you least expect them; in your child's school. Many American schools have hallways lined with vending machines that sell soft drinks and unhealthy snacks. With the lack of school funding that is all too common today;

school boards have turned to soft drink and junk food vending machine sales to boost revenue. As well, most school cafeterias serve any number of fast foods each day. It's not uncommon for schools to make marketing deals with leading soft drink companies from which they receive commissions. These are based on a percentage of sales at each school and sometimes a lump-sum payment. Two school boards in Ontario recently revealed they have contracts with Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola for vending machines



in the cafeteria—a contract estimated at \$10 million dollars. The extra money generated from vending machine sales is appealing to school boards because it can help pay for things such as school supplies and programs. But should this new wave fundraising come at the expense of our children's health?

Also, with these contracts signed it becomes incumbent on the school administration to push the products. One school in Prince George's County guaranteed sales of 4,500 cases of soda a year -- or about 50 sodas a student. Some contracts state that schools could lose money if they turn off the machines at lunchtime, as required by state and federal law.

The revenues are usually used for various academic and after-school activities, but what activity could be worth devastating the student's health, which is exactly what consuming all that soda and junk food is doing? It's time for parents to speak out in favor of support for proper funding in our schools so they can afford to get rid of vending machines. Replace their contents with pure water and healthy snacks. This

alone could make a big difference, as vending machines will increase the consumption of sweetened beverages by up to 50 or more cans of soda per student per year. That's a lot of sugar.

## The Internet

More and more children have access to the Internet, which means that

marketers have gained another avenue to market their products. Almost every major junk food, from snacks to candy to soft drinks, has its own promotional Web site. The sites typically cater to children and teenagers and are filled with interactive games featuring the product, giveaways, contests and other information about the product.

Kids are likely to be drawn in by the games and contests; where they are subtly inundated with images of a particular junk food or junk food brand. Although they may think they are simply playing a game, the games typically have a junk-food theme

that exposes them to nutritionally devoid products during their play time.

Although you can't realistically shelter your child from every advertisement out there, you can sit down with them and discuss the ads you do see. Explain to them that these businesses are selling a product and that they need to think about all aspects of the item (nutritional value, price, etc.) and not rely solely on the flashy ad to make their decision. And, make sure that you are a good role model for you child. If you eat a lot of junk food, you'll have a hard time convincing your child that they shouldn't eat it.

## WHAT IS JUNK FOOD?

Junk food is a term, used for any food that is unhealthy and has low or poor nutritional value. You may consider it as any food that contributes little or no nutrient value to the diet, but instead provides excess calories and fat. Some examples of junk food are candy, soft drinks, chips, processed foods and most foods from fast food restaurants. A diet rich in junk food is the direct opposite of a "balanced and healthy diet."

A diet high in junk food is widely considered by the medical community to substantially increase the risks of health problems such as obesity, osteoporosis and heart disease. A diet composed entirely of junk food may lead to malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies and other serious health problems. Eating disorders are almost as common as acne in teenagers today. These

can create many health problems, not the least of which is potential death.

A new study suggests that children who overeat have a higher risk of developing certain cancers in adulthood. Using a national database of health information, the British researchers determined which of the children who participated in that study had developed cancer as adults. They found that higher levels of energy intake in childhood increase the risk of the later development of cancer. For each increase of 250 calories in a child's typical daily diet, there is a 20% increased risk of death from certain cancers, the researchers calculated. The findings confirm the importance of optimal nutrition in childhood and suggest that the unfavorable trends seen in the incidence of some cancers may have their origins in early life.

A junk food diet of cheese, crackers, soda, cookies, chocolate and water--along with no fruit and vegetables whatsoever--caused a young college student to develop scurvy, a condition brought on by vitamin C deficiency. (Scurvy, which once affected sailors who did not get enough vitamin C in their diets, is characterized by symptoms such as bleeding gums, loose teeth, muscle degeneration and weakness.)

The student went to the doctor because he was experiencing swelling and bruising on his legs. He was also found to have bleeding gums and a rapid heartbeat. Although he was eating enough calories, researchers estimated that his vitamin C intake was about 0.1 milligram per day--well below the 90 milligrams per day recommended daily allowance (RDA) for nonsmoking men. His blood level of vitamin C was found to be at least four-fold below normal range.

Scurvy is only one of the potentially unlimited health disasters that these kids are risking by choosing to avoid foods that their bodies were designed to eat. They are exchanging their health for convenience and taste. Not a very good exchange from my perspective.

## An American way of life

Junk food is relatively cheap to manufacture, is convenient to consume and has a lot of flavor because of its typically high fat, sodium or sugar content. Its nutritional value is typically very



high in empty calories. Junk food is also notorious for containing numerous food additives, which are used to enhance flavor, adjust texture, alter color and prevent spoilage. Is it any wonder why schoolchildren 'prefer junk food?'

Due to its inherent attractiveness, junk food has evolved into a large, world-wide industry. Standard industrial manufacturing and marketing techniques have been successful in increasing consumption of "unbalanced" junk food diets to the extent that it is now a serious health problem. It is heavily advertised to young people, who have poor judgment and often favor taste over nutritional value.

Today in America junk food has become a way of life. The manufacturers tantalize us with new, fun, tasty and intriguing snack foods each day. Unfortunately, most of them are also addictive. The food companies make sure they taste good and are quite affordable; but they neglect to reveal to the consumer that it will cost them far, far more than they expect to pay in the long run. The price, convenience and taste pales in comparison to the amount time, effort and money they will spend later in life trying to get healthy again.

You can only fool your body for so long. It is a virtual certainty

that if you subsist on fast foods you are accelerating the aging process and compromising your health. There is just no way around it, if you want your children to reap a healthy life, you need to spend some serious time in the kitchen preparing your own food.

The United States has nearly 200,000 fast-food restaurants and over 3 million



soft-drink vending machines. We also have an extremely wide variety of processed foods available in our grocery and convenient stores. About 90 percent of the money Americans spend on food goes toward processed foods.

Can you or your children possibly be healthy with that much processed food in your diet? Your goal should be to reverse this ratio and strive for 90 percent non-processed food and only 10 percent from other food sources. Not only will you enjoy the health benefits, but the satisfaction of preparing meals and controlling what your children eat is a great feeling.

### Consider some of the latest health statistics:

**35% of boys are overweight**

**29% of girls are overweight**

**17% of boys are obese**

**15% of girls are obese**

**42 to 63% of obese school-aged children will become obese adults**

The really sad part is that junk food intake is worsening. According to a large number of studies tracking changes in the

U.S. diet over the past 25 years, more Americans than ever are gorging on calorie-rich, nutrient-poor snacks, sodas and sweets; forsaking healthy, home-cooked meals.

We have a specific responsibility towards children. They don't have free choice and they don't have the necessary

information or understanding to make informed choices either.

### Junk food is shutting out healthy food

Studies clearly show that nutrient-poor junk food and sugary drinks are replacing nutrient-rich foods such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables among our children. Studies also show that children who drink sweetened drinks consume 244 more calories a day than children who do not. We know that if the number of calories consumed equals the number of calories burned, we can maintain our weight. So, by ridding the diet of excess "empty" calories coming from sugary drinks, we can start to help our children achieve a normal weight.

In addition, the large amounts of sugar consumed at school can cause children to have poor concentration in class.

A couple of years ago a young filmmaker named Morgan Spurlock had a bright idea for a movie project. It was Thanksgiving Day 2002 and he was slumped on his mother's couch after eating far too much. He saw a news item about two teenage girls in New York suing McDonald's for making them obese. The company responded by saying their food was nutritious and good for people. Is that so, he wondered? To find out, he committed himself to his 30 days of Big Mac bingeing.

The first clue to his particular tale comes in the title of his documentary, which is called "Super Size Me." It is a sometimes comic but serious look at America's addiction to fast food. Spurlock, a tall New Yorker of usually cast-iron constitution, made himself the guinea pig in this dogged investigation into the effects of fast food on the body. He ate only at McDonald's for a month - three meals, every day - and took a camera crew along to record it. If a server offered to super-size his order, he was obliged to accept; and to ingest everything, pickles and all.

Neither Spurlock, 33, nor the three doctors who agreed to monitor his health during the experiment were prepared for the degree of ruin it would wreak on his body. Within days, he was vomiting up his burgers and battling with headaches and depression. And his sex drive

vanished.

When Spurlock had finished, his liver, overwhelmed by saturated fats, had virtually turned to pate. "The liver test was the most shocking thing," said Dr Daryl Isaacs, who joined the team to watch over him. "It became very, very abnormal."

Spurlock put on nearly 12kg over the period and his cholesterol level leapt from a respectable 165 to 230. He told the New York Post: "I got desperately ill. My face was splotchy and I had this huge gut, which I've never had in my life ... It was amazing - and really frightening."

And his girlfriend, a vegan chef?

"She was

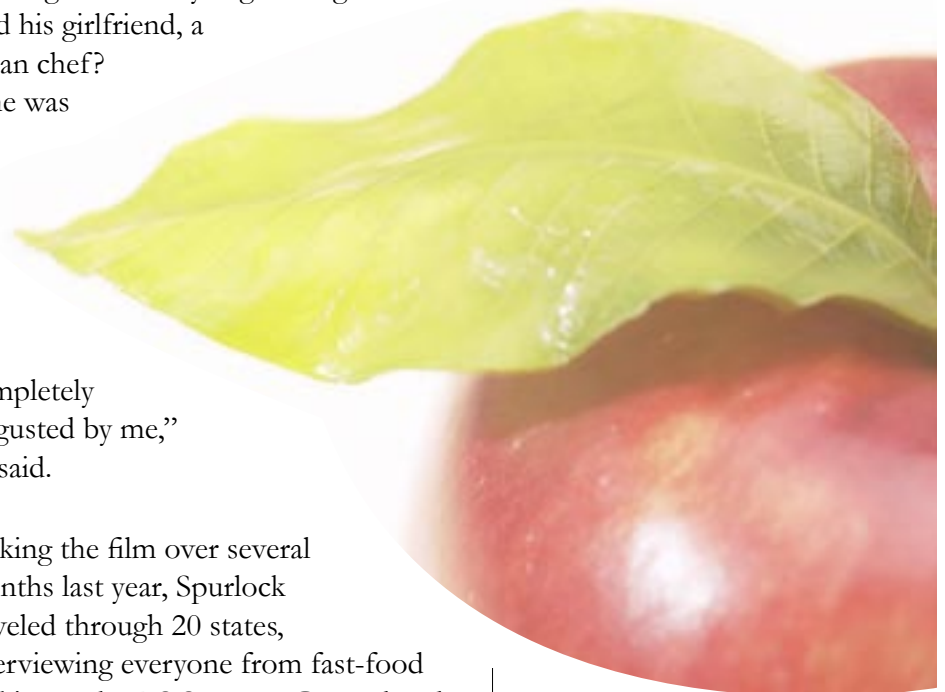
completely disgusted by me," he said.

Making the film over several months last year, Spurlock traveled through 20 states, interviewing everyone from fast-food junkies to the US Surgeon General and a lobbyist for the industry. McDonald's, for whom the film can only be a public relations catastrophe, ignored his repeated entreaties for comment.

McDonald's, though, has finally been forced to comment. "Consumers can achieve balance in their daily dining decisions by choosing from our array of quality offerings and range of portion sizes to meet their taste and nutrition goals," it said in a statement last week.

Spurlock claims that the goal was not

to attack McDonald's as such. Among the issues he highlights is the willingness of schools to feed students nothing but burgers and pizza. "If there's one thing we could accomplish with the film, it is that we make people think about what they put in their mouth," he said. "So the next time you do go into a fast-food restaurant and they say, 'Would you like to upsize that?' you think about it and say, 'Maybe I won't. Maybe I'll stick with the medium this time.'"



### What exactly is being done?

Many areas are following in the footsteps of places, such as New York City, California and Texas which have mandates in place to stop the sale of junk food and sugary drinks in schools. The government is now acting on the principles of "practicing what you preach" to help fight childhood obesity. If we are going to teach our children about healthy eating and living, we shouldn't have

junk foods and sugary drinks at their disposal in the very place we are teaching them. This sends a conflicting message to our impressionable young children about health. It is also very easy for a child to get a dollar for a soft drink or fries and toss out their homemade lunch.

School boards are now being asked to replace junk foods and sugary drinks in elementary schools with healthier snacks, water and 100% juices. In fact, just announced this week, the beverage companies have decided that by the

next school year, vending machines in elementary schools will only offer fruit juices, water and sports drinks. A good step indeed, but only 50 % of the choices will be the healthy drinks such as 100% juices and water. The other 50% will be sugary sports drinks and juice drinks. Also, last month (June 2005) the junk food industry won a major victory, when the U.S. Department of Agriculture rejected a petition that it enforce its own competitive foods rule, which prohibits public schools from selling “foods of minimal nutritional value” during mealtimes in school cafeterias. The rule was designed to promote the health of school children, but

enforcement today is lax to non-existent. In the petition, Commercial Alert requested simply that the USDA enforce the rule as written. But the USDA has said “No.”

Stanley C. Garnett, director of USDA’s Child Nutrition Division, wrote to Commercial Alert that “At this time, we do not intend to undertake the activities or measures you recommended in your petition.”

“It is outrageous that the USDA is refusing to enforce its own rules against

campaign?

The refusal to enforce the competitive food rule is just the latest in a long series of favors for the junk food industry. For example, the Administration has opposed restrictions on junk food marketing to children. It worked hard to weaken the World Health Organization’s global anti-obesity strategy, and went so far as to question the scientific basis for “the linking of fruit and vegetable consumption to decreased risk of



selling junk food in public schools,” said Gary Ruskin, executive director of Commercial Alert. “They have turned their back on American children, who are suffering from an epidemic of obesity.”

The USDA’s decision comes just days after the Justice Department slashed the penalty it seeks in a lawsuit against the tobacco industry from \$130 billion to \$10 billion. So what’s happening here? First the government caved in to tobacco industry and then they caved in to junk food industry. It’s obvious that big corporations come first and our children’s health comes last. Do you believe it is just a coincidence that executives and lobbyists from companies that produce junk food for schoolchildren generously contributed to the 2004 Presidential

obesity and diabetes.”

Former HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson even told members of the Grocery Manufacturers Association to “go on the offensive’ against critics blaming the food industry for obesity,” according to a November 12, 2002 GMA news release.

In January, Lynn Swann, chairman of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness, was paid to appear at a public relations event for the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA), a vending machine trade group.

In March, the USDA admitted in a report that it does not know whether schools are complying with prohibitions against the sale of foods of minimal nutritional value during school mealtimes. The report stated, “it is unclear to what extent federal and state regulations [against the sale of foods of minimum nutritional value] are enforced at the local level”.

Foods of minimal nutritional value are defined as soda pop, water ices, chewing gum and certain types of candies, such as hard candies, jellied candies, licorice and marshmallows.

## The Real Dangers of Soda to You and Your Children

The average American drinks an estimated 56 gallons of soft drinks each year. Consider this: one can of soda has about 10 teaspoons of sugar, 150 calories, 30 to 55 mg of caffeine and is full of artificial food colors and sulphites. This is an alarming amount of sugar, calories and harmful additives in a product that has absolutely no nutritional value. Plus, studies have linked soda to osteoporosis, obesity, tooth decay and heart disease. Despite all this, soft drinks account for more than one-quarter of all drinks consumed in the United States.

Teenagers and children, whom soft drinks are marketed toward, are among the largest consumers. In the past 10 years, soft drink consumption among children has almost doubled in the United States. Teenage boys now drink, on average, three or more cans of soda per day, and 10 percent drink

seven or more cans a day. The average for teenage girls is more than two cans a day and 10 percent drink more than five cans a day.

While these numbers may sound high, they're not surprising considering that most school hallways are lined with vending machines that sell soft drinks.

### What is in a soft drink?

**Phosphoric Acid:** This will interfere with the body's ability to use calcium, which can lead to osteoporosis or softening of the teeth and bones. Phosphoric acid also neutralizes the hydrochloric acid in your stomach, which can interfere with digestion, making it difficult to utilize nutrients.

**Sugar:** Soft drink manufacturers are the largest single user of refined sugar in the United States. It is a known that sugar increases insulin levels, which can lead to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, weight gain, premature aging and many more negative side effects.

**Aspartame:** This chemical is used as a sugar substitute in diet soda and is extremely toxic and is now known to cause many potentially deadly ailments, especially after having been consumed for years. There are over 90 different health side effects associated with aspartame consumption including brain tumors, birth defects, diabetes, emotional disorders and epilepsy/seizures. Further, when aspartame is stored for long periods of time or kept in warm areas it changes to methanol, an alcohol that converts to formaldehyde and formic acid, which are known carcinogens.

**Caffeine:** Caffeinated drinks cause jitters, insomnia, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, elevated blood cholesterol levels, vitamin and mineral depletion,

breast lumps, birth defects, and perhaps some forms of cancer.

**Tap Water:** Everyone should avoid drinking tap water because it can carry any number of chemicals including chlorine, trihalomethanes, lead, cadmium, and various organic pollutants. Tap water is the main ingredient in bottled soft drinks.

Soda is one of the main reasons, nutritionally speaking, why many people suffer health problems. Aside from the negative effects of the soda itself, drinking a lot of soda is likely to leave you with little appetite for vegetables, protein and other food that your body needs.

If you are still drinking soda, stopping the habit is an easy way to improve your health. Pure chemical free, clean, restructured and alkalizing water is a much better choice.

### Statistics on soft drinks

These popular beverages account for more than a quarter of all drinks consumed in the United States.

More than 15 billion gallons were sold in 2000.

That works out to at least one 12-ounce can per day for every man, woman and child.

Kids are heavy consumers of soft drinks, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and they are guzzling soda pop at unprecedented rates.

Carbonated soda pop provides more added sugar in a typical 2-year-old toddler's diet than cookies, candies and ice cream combined.

Fifty-six percent of 8-year-olds down soft drinks daily and a third of teenage boys drink at least three cans of soda pop per day.

Not only are soft drinks widely available everywhere, from fast food restaurants to video stores, they're now sold in 60 percent of all public and private middle schools and high schools nationwide, according to the National Soft Drink Association. A few schools are even giving away soft drinks to students who buy school lunches.

As soda pop becomes the beverage of choice among the nation's young -- and as soda marketers focus on brand-building among younger and younger consumers -- public health officials, school boards, parents, consumer groups and even the soft drink industry are faced with nagging questions:

How healthful are these beverages, which provide a lot calories, sugars and caffeine but no significant nutritional value? And what happens if you drink a lot of them at a very young age?

## Health Effects Of Soft Drinks

### Obesity

Reporting in *The Lancet*, a British medical journal, a team of Harvard researchers presented the first evidence linking soft drink

consumption to childhood obesity. They found that 12-year-olds who drank soft drinks regularly were more likely to be overweight than those who didn't.

For each additional daily serving of sugar-sweetened soft drink consumed during the nearly two-year study, the risk of obesity increased 1.6 times.

Obesity experts called the Harvard findings important and praised the study



for being prospective. In other words, the Harvard researchers spent 19 months following the children, rather than capturing a snapshot of data from just one day. It's considered statistically more valuable to conduct a study over a long period of time.

Researchers found that schoolchildren who drank soft drinks consumed almost 200 more calories per day than their counterparts who didn't down soft drinks. That finding helps support the notion that we don't compensate well for calories in liquid form.

### Tooth Decay

Here's one health effect that even the soft drink industry admits, grudgingly, has merit. In a carefully worded statement, the NSDA says that "there's no scientific evidence that consumption of sugars per se has any negative effect other than dental caries." But the association also correctly notes that soft drinks aren't the sole cause of tooth decay.

In fact, a lot of sugary foods, from fruit juices to candy and even raisins and other dried fruit, have what dentists refer to as "cariogenic properties," which is to say they can cause tooth decay.

Okay, so how many more cavities are soft drink consumers likely to get compared with people who don't drink soda? This is where it gets complicated.

A federally funded study of nearly 3,200 Americans 9 to 29 years old conducted between 1971 and 1974 showed a direct link between tooth decay and soft drinks. Numerous other studies have shown the same link throughout the world, from Sweden to Iraq.

But sugar isn't the only ingredient in soft drinks that causes tooth problems. The acids in soda pop are also notorious for etching tooth enamel in ways that can lead to cavities. "Acid begins to dissolve tooth enamel in only 20 minutes," notes the Ohio Dental Association in a release issued earlier this month.

## Caffeine Dependence

The stimulant properties and dependence potential of caffeine in soda are well documented, as are their effects on children. Ever tried going without your usual cup of java on the weekend? If so, you may have experienced a splitting headache, a slight rise in blood pressure, irritability and maybe even some stomach problems. These well-documented symptoms describe the typical withdrawal process suffered by about half of regular caffeine consumers who go without their usual dose.

The soft drink industry agrees that caffeine causes the same effects in children as adults, but officials also note that there is wide variation in how people respond to caffeine. The simple solution, the industry says, is to choose a soda pop that is caffeine-free. All big soda makers offer products with either low or no caffeine. That may be a good idea, though it raises the question of whether soda machines in schools should be permitted to offer caffeinated beverages. After all, we are talking about the developing brains of children and adolescents. Logic dictates that when you are dependent on a drug, you are really upsetting the normal balances of neurochemistry in the brain. The fact that kids have withdrawal signs and symptoms when the caffeine is stopped is a good indication that something has been profoundly disturbed in the brain.

Exactly where that leads is anybody's guess -- which is to say there is little good research on the

effects of caffeine on kids' developing brains.

## Bone Weakening

Animal studies demonstrate that phosphorus, a common ingredient in soda, can deplete bones of calcium.

And two recent human studies suggest that girls who drink more soda are more prone to broken bones. The industry denies that soda plays a role in bone weakening.

Animal studies -- mostly involving rats -- point to clear and consistent bone loss with the use of cola beverages. But as scientists like to point out, humans and rats are not exactly the same.

Even so, there's been concern among the research community, public health officials and government agencies over the high phosphorus content in the US diet. Phosphorus -- which occurs naturally in some foods and is used as an additive in many others -- appears to weaken bones by promoting the loss of calcium. With less calcium available, the bones become more porous and prone to fracture.

The soft drink industry argues that the phosphoric acid in soda pop contributes only about 2 percent of the phosphorus in the typical US diet, with a 12-ounce can of soda pop averaging about 30 milligrams.

## What can be done to stop this Child Abuse?

Let's face it; we live in a society that glamorizes youth, fitness and health. Yet most of us succumb to bad habits such as eating a poor diet and consuming junk foods. We see commercials and ads about what we should look like and then are bombarded by advertising for junk food.

No wonder we struggle with conflicting and guilty feelings. Obesity, eating disorders and body image problems are products of all these mixed messages.

Our children are most at risk for these conflicting messages. They are taught by parents and teachers to eat right and exercise but they see their heroes and role models pushing soda and junk food. Saturday morning commercials sell sugary cereals and junk food and to make matters worse many of our schools have junk food and soda vending machines in the hallways. How can we teach them what is healthy and then sabotage our message with school lunches and vending machines? Do our teachings and lessons about health become confusing and meaningless in this sea of contradiction? I believe they do.

A first step must be to ban junk food advertising; we have seen the public health benefits of banning tobacco advertising and governments must now have the courage to take the same approach with unhealthy food, at least where children are concerned.

We mustn't blame obesity on the victims, especially children or concentrate on weight and body shape to the exclusion of fitness and health. The responsibility for tackling obesity and poor diet extends to the food industry and those with the power to curb its excesses in government at all levels. Promoting health should be central to what government should be all about.

The main strategy is to remember

that you are in control; at least at home. Buy mostly fresh foods. If you keep the junk foods out of your home, you and your children will not be consuming them. This isn't rocket science. You can avoid processed foods and prepare non-processed food meals.

How do you kick the junk food habit? There are two alternatives, cold-turkey or gradual changes in eating behaviors. You need to choose the method that will work best for you. Cold turkey means you begin by cleaning out your refrigerator and cupboards of all junk food. Do not tempt yourself by keeping it around.

The next step to kicking the junk food habit is to focus on eating healthy foods. Be sure visible and hidden snack foods are healthy food choices. Keep a fruit basket on your kitchen counter or table. In addition, plan alternate activities for times that you might be tempted to munch on junk food. Avoid situations that may encourage a "junk attack," like sitting in front of the television all evening.

Even with gradual changes the same advice can be followed. However, first identify your weaknesses and develop a game plan for gradually eliminating (or at least controlling) junk food in your diet. Make a few changes every 3 to 4 weeks. People, who make positive changes and maintain them over 6 to 9 weeks, are usually able to live with them forever.

Changing one's diet and snack habits takes time. A variety of benefits, like better sleeping

patterns, less indigestion, regular bowel movements, less irritability, increased stamina, and even weight loss for some will occur over time. Most people who avoid junk food for long periods have no interest in returning to that eating style because the benefits of healthy eating are so strong.

We need a commitment to making a difference. We must be an example for the younger generation, who we all have an obligation to pass down our wisdom to. Children really do watch what we do very carefully and these models on a daily basis are invaluable. Combining good habits and education is an antidote to all the other negative influences referred to above. Almost one-third of the U.S. diet consists of sugar-filled cans of soda and bags of potato chips. Junk food or empty calories accounts for almost 25 percent of all calories eaten by Americans. On the other hand, nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables account for only 10 percent of the total calories consumed by Americans.

You as a parent hold the power, good habits when started young form a foundation children can return to even after the teenage years when they may begin to make unwise food choices. They need to experiment as they get older but many will return to the healthy foundations they learned early on. A good breakfast is very important that does not include sugary foods. A healthy lunch at school either by bringing a prepared lunch or discussing what are healthy choices at school is vital as well. Cooking a healthy dinner that includes lots of vegetables, whole grains that are not processed and good quality protein is a great way to end the day and prepare for a clear mind for homework. Good health and clear messages begin at home. And as far as junk food goes- junk it!



## The Water Vitalizer Plus

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