



Food and beverage advertising to children and teens in Canada

Advertising is an important influence on children's food choices in Canada

Obesity and chronic disease are major health concerns for Canada's children and teens

- Chronic diseases, like diabetes, are on the rise in children and teens in Canada.^{1,2,3}



- Nearly **1 in 3** children and teens in Canada (**ages 5 to 17**) lives with overweight or obesity, putting them at risk for chronic disease.⁴

Diet is one of the most important factors in preventing obesity and diet-related chronic disease

- Good nutrition is the foundation of children's health and development. Poor childhood nutrition harms physical and cognitive development.⁵

Advertising influences diet



- Exposure to advertising affects children's food preferences, requests and intake.⁶ This influence can continue into adulthood.



- Some foods can contribute to excess intakes of **sodium, sugars** and **saturated fat**. We know that a lot of exposure to ads for these foods contributes to diet-related chronic disease.

We're taking action to monitor food and beverage advertising to children and teens in Canada

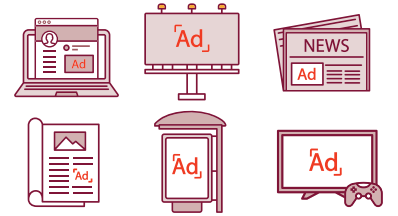
- Food and beverage advertising makes healthy eating initiatives less effective and makes it harder to follow Canada's Food Guide. That's why we're monitoring food and beverage advertising to children and teens in Canada.
- Monitoring food and beverage advertising supports evidence-based policy, and strengthens our understanding of what influences healthy eating. It also lets us evaluate trends over time and identify gaps in evidence.

What our monitoring and other data tell us so far

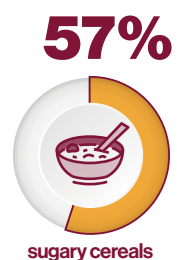
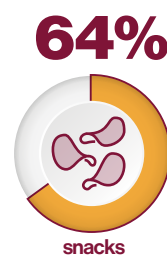
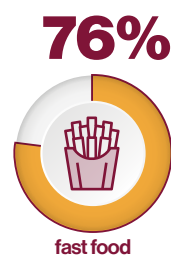
Advertisers reach children and teens where they live, learn and play

Children and teens reported seeing food and beverage advertising in many settings, including:⁷

- online
- in stores
- at school
- in video games
- TV and movies
- in magazines or newspapers
- outdoors (like billboards and bus shelters)



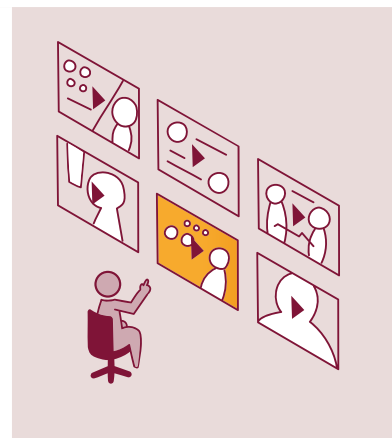
These **percentages of children and teens reported seeing ads** for these products at least once a week:⁷



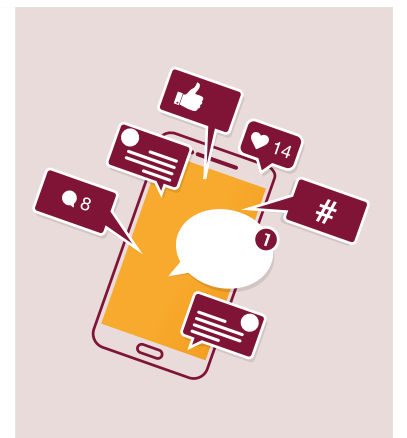
Advertising is pervasive on TV and online



On average, children and teens aged 2 to 17 saw nearly **5 food ads per day**, adding up to more than **1,700 food and beverage ads** on TV in 2019.^{8,9}



From June 2015 to May 2016, there were **14.4 million food ads** on children and teens' (ages 12 to 17) top 10 preferred websites.¹⁰



On Instagram and Facebook, the **top 40 food and beverage brands** posted **1,484** times over just 3 months (April to June 2021).¹¹

Most of this advertising is for food that undermines healthy eating

The vast majority of food and beverage ads on TV (**92%**) and on children's and teens' favourite websites (**93%**) were for products that undermine healthy eating.^{8,10}

On TV, fast food restaurants were by far the most frequently advertised food category.^{8,9}

Top food categories children and teens were exposed to on TV advertisements in 2019

Food category	Ad exposure (ads/child/year)
Fast food restaurants	42%
Non-fast food restaurants	8%
Cold cereals	7%
Snack foods (e.g., chips, puffs, popcorn)	5%
Chocolate bars, chocolate candy	5%



The most frequently advertised food categories on children's and teens' top 10 websites between 2015 and 2016 were:¹⁰



Lots of strategies are used to advertise to children and teens

On TV, some of the top techniques used to advertise to children included:^{8,9}

- child-appealing products
- special effects
- child actors

For teens, the use of teen themes and teen actors were most common.^{8,9}

On social media, the top techniques used to advertise products directed at teens were:¹¹

- viral marketing¹²
- calls to action¹³
- celebrity endorsements

On food packages, the most common techniques used to advertise to children were:¹⁴

- child-appealing visual or graphic design
- appeals to “fun” or “cool”
- presence of branded characters or spokespersons

Overall, teens tended to see more advertisements with sports teams or athletes, while children saw more advertisements with food company characters.⁷

Percentage of children and teens who reported seeing foods and beverages advertised with the following strategies in the last 30 days, 2021⁷

Strategy	Children (10 to 12)	Teens (13 to 17)
Cartoons/characters made by food companies	41%	38%
Famous people	33%	34%
Sports teams or athletes	28%	32%
Cartoons/characters from movies or TV	29%	28%



A lot of money is spent on food advertising to children and teens

Overall, more than **\$628 million** was spent on food advertising in Canada in 2019 across¹⁵:

- print
- radio
- websites
- television
- out-of-home (such as billboards or transit shelters)

Of this, approximately **\$95 million** was spent on food products or brands commonly advertised to children. **\$115 million** was spent on food products or brands commonly advertised to teens.¹⁶

Endnotes

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- "Viral marketing" was defined as posts encouraging peer-to-peer marketing (e.g., sharing, tagging friends, retweets, likes, hashtags, encouraging commenting, @ mentions, etc.)
- "Calls to action" were defined as sending viewers online to access a brand website or app, including posts where exact website link is not included (e.g., "Go to link in our bio").
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- Products and brands "commonly advertised to children and teens" were defined as the top 50 most advertised food products or brands on children's or teen's specialty TV stations in Canada.

