

December 2006

**Response by the
Irish Heart Foundation to OfCom's'
*'Television Advertising of Food and Drink Products to Children –
Statement and Further Consultation'***

The Irish Heart Foundation welcomes the opportunity to respond to OfCom regarding its consultation entitled 'Television Advertising of Food and Drink Products to Children – Statement and Further Consultation'.

The Irish Heart Foundation* (IHF) is the only national voluntary organisation working towards the prevention of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Through medical research, school, workplace and community-based lifestyle programmes, the IHF is working to reduce the unacceptable level of premature death and disability from CVD.

What happens in relation to television advertising is relevant in Ireland as many UK television stations are broadcast here including UTV (ITV), Channel 4, GMTV and children's channels.

The Irish Heart Foundation welcomes the decision by OfCom to extend the scope of the restrictions to include all children under the age of 16 years, as opposed to the original proposal of those under 9 years.

The Foundation also welcomes the plan to use the Food Standards Agency's nutrient profiling scheme to determine what foods are classified being high in fat, salt or sugar.

However, the Foundation is most disappointed that advertisements to children for foods high in fat, salt and sugar will not be restricted up to the 9pm watershed and in effect will only be limited to the traditional hours of children's TV. OfCom's own research has shown that 71% of the television watched by children is outside of these hours and research by the Food Commission showed that children view adult programmes as well as children's programmes¹. Therefore the extent of the effect of the restrictions is questionable. While the Irish Heart Foundation does acknowledge that the principle of parental responsibility, it has been demonstrated that parents are in practice 'less than successful' in monitoring children's television consumption².

The Foundation is also disappointed that the restrictions will not cover branding of foods high in fat salt and sugar, given that this is a powerful form of marketing, especially to children³

The above is the view of the Irish Heart Foundation as published in a Position Paper in November 2005⁴ and presented to Irish Government and politicians as well as submitted to our own consultation on the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland's Children's Advertising Code.

References:

1. The Food Commission (2006) Advertising regulator caves into industry.
www.foodcom.org.uk
2. Hanley P (2000) Copycat Kids? The influence of television advertising on children and teenagers, ITC, London.
3. Food Standards Agency (2003) *Review of research on the effects of food promotion to children*: www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/promotion/readreview/
4. National Heart Alliance (2005) Position Paper on Marketing of Foods to Children www.irishheart.ie

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