

# National Heart Alliance

December 2006

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

The National Heart Alliance 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 National Heart Alliance is composed of thirty organisations working in collaboration with the aim of improving heart health in the Irish population. The Alliance includes representatives from several health-related NGO's, academic institutions and professional organisations (see full list in Appendix).

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 National Heart Alliance 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 Alliance 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 Alliance 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 programmes<sup>1</sup>. Therefore the extent of the effect of the restrictions is questionable. While the National Heart Alliance 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 consumption<sup>2</sup>.

The Alliance 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 children<sup>3</sup>

The above is the view of the National Heart Alliance as published in a Position Paper in November 2005<sup>4</sup> 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](http://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/](http://www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/promotion/readreview/)
4. National Heart Alliance (2005) Position Paper on Marketing of Foods to Children [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)

## Appendix One

### National Heart Alliance Members

Chairman: Prof David Kennedy

- ASH Ireland
- Association of Health Promotion Ireland
- Athlone Institute of Technology
- Dental Health Foundation
- Diabetes Federation of Ireland
- Dublin City University
- Dublin Healthy Cities
- Dublin Institute of Technology
- European Institute of Women's Health
- Food Safety Authority of Ireland
- Food Safety Promotion Board
- Health Service Executive
- Institute of Community Health Nursing
- Institute of Public Health
- Irish Cancer Society
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Irish Heart Foundation
- Irish National Health Promoting Hospitals Network
- Irish Nurses Organisation
- Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute
- Irish Sports Council
- Joint Managerial Body of Secondary Schools
- National Sudden Infant Death Register
- National Youth Council of Ireland
- Programme of Action for Children
- Marino Institute, SPHE National Coordinator
- St Vincent's University Hospital – Dept. of Preventive Medicine
- University of Limerick

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