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Studies Link Childhood Obesity To Television Advertising, Fast Food

Thursday, February 26, 2004

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Excessive television watching — which exposes U.S. children to 40,000 advertisements of them for unhealthy fast foods — is making kids fatter and fatter, two reports released said.

According to [Reuters](#), the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) and the [Center for Science in the I](#) both released reports on the heels of a [American Psychological Association](#) study published before, which proposes legal limits on what advertising can be aimed at children.

The Kaiser Family Foundation [study](#) found that while the research didn't directly link watching to child obesity, evidence did strongly point to advertisements focusing on junk as major culprits.

"We know that advertising works, and it works well," said Elizabeth Vandewater, a human development expert at the [University of Texas](#) at Austin.

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The typical child sees 40,000 advertisements each year, mostly for candy, cereal, soda, found Kaiser experts. In turn, fast food meals, which typically have 600 to 1,000 calories, make children fatter, according to CSPI.

The Kaiser researchers found little evidence to support the "couch potato theory" — that television makes kids obese because they are not out playing.

The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has found that since 1980 the proportion of overweight children ages 6 to 11 has more than doubled. It estimates that 10 percent of children between 6 and 9 years old are overweight (Maggie Fox, [Reuters](#)).

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In a related study also published Tuesday, the [Archives of Disease in Childhood](#) reports that obesity is increasing at an alarming rate and children's clothing industries are accommodating ever-expanding waistlines by making roomier clothing, [Globe and Mail](#) said.

Children's clothing is manufactured up to size 20 with "size variations" to accommodate youngsters. Karen Lovell, a buyer with the Toronto children's store Jolly Tots, said that she has been in retail, she has noticed a difference in the shape of children's and teenage clothing giving more room in the waist and fitting loosely.

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Excess abdominal fat has been linked to increased risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. A more accurate determinant of body mass than obesity. The trend is getting worse, according to data that suggests obese children grow up to be obese teenagers. Most of the bulk around the waist.

A [British Medical Journal](#) study last year corroborated this theory, finding that in 1977 the average waistline was 66 centimeters for girls of 16 years of age and 72 centimeters for boys. B

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numbers had increased to 73 for girls and 80 for boys (Andre Picard, *Globe and Mail*, F

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