

Irish Heart Foundation maintains position on ban to 9pm for TV ads promoting HFSS foods

Initial response to consultation on the Review of the BAI's Children's Commercial Communications Code

The Irish Heart Foundation today (Tuesday, August 30th) welcomed the consultation on the Review of the BAI's Children's Commercial Communications Code and maintained its position calling for a ban until 9pm on the advertising of foods high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) to children and young people up to age 16.

According to the national charity fighting heart disease and stroke, the diet and health of Irish children continues to be a major public health concern with overwhelming evidence of the impact of advertising foods on their health.

Michael O'Shea, Chief Executive, Irish Heart Foundation said: "The stark reality is that one in five Irish children and young people aged 5-17 years is overweight or obese. This picture is even more shocking when we focus on 7-year-old Irish children where obesity affects eight percent of girls and five percent of boys. Childhood obesity is strongly linked to risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD), which is the No 1 killer in Ireland. Over 60 percent of children who are overweight before puberty will be overweight in early adulthood."

Mr O'Shea stressed that we could learn from the UK experience where there are restrictions in place on TV ads for foods HFSS up to 7pm. In the last year, a number of leading health and political reports have strongly criticised UK Government policy and the current restrictions, which they say, do not go far enough. The House of Lords Science and Technology Select committee on Behaviour Change, The National Institute for Clinical Excellence and last week The Lancet all called for UK restrictions to be extended, given that children watch family programmes after 7pm.

According to the national charity, little progress has been made since the launch of the Obesity Task Force Report six years ago but the Review of the Children's Commercial Communications Code provides a clear path to reduce the impact of a key environmental driver of obesity by allowing for legislation to reduce advertising exposure to children.

Mr O'Shea concluded: "It is now the responsibility of Irish people, health and consumer groups to respond to the BAI with their views on this important issue. In 2008, 4 in 5 Irish parents said they would support a ban on TV ads for foods HFSS until 9pm. Let us hope that this can be brought into effect to protect children's health and create a more supportive environment."

ENDS

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