



Save the couch potato **children** with a TV ban on **junk food** ads

CHILDHOOD obesity could be slowed if **junk food** adverts were banned before the 9pm watershed, a children's rights campaigner claimed.

There are currently estimated to be more than 350,000 obese or overweight **children** in Ireland and this number is increasing by 11,000 a year.

Communications Minister Eamon Ryan has been called on to restrict the advertising of unhealthy **food** and drinks in the media.

The Consumers' Association of Ireland and the Children's Rights Alliance have joined forces to demand he introduce laws to ban **food** companies from targeting impressionable **children** during daytime and early-evening TV programming.

The move is part of a world-wide campaign, **Junk Food Generation**, co-ordinated by Consumers International.

It was launched yesterday on World Consumer Rights Day urging governments around the world to reform advertising laws.

Jillian van Turnhout, chief executive of the Children's

By **Fergal Blaney**
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Rights Alliance, said **children** should be prioritised ahead of commercial interests, the media and advertising industries.

'It is vital that Minister Ryan and the Government remain committed to the Broadcasting Bill in order to protect **children** from inappropriate advertising and **marketing**.

'Putting the health of **children** ahead of commercial interests in the **food** and advertising

'Voluntary code failed'

industries is the only way forward, if we are to reverse the increasing levels of child obesity,' she said.

The alliance believes that voluntary regulation under the Children's Advertising Code, introduced in 2005, has not worked.

Miss van Turnhout wants all **junk food** advertising aimed at **children** outlawed and sees the

restriction of television adverts as the first step.

She said: 'Voluntary codes do not work. We call for a ban on the advertising of **junk food** before the 9pm watershed, as part of a wider strategy to tackle the growing levels of childhood obesity in Ireland.'

The Broadcasting Bill, which gives the minister powers to ban **junk food** adverts, was published in May 2008 and is expected to be formally enacted this spring.

Dermott Jewell, the chief executive of the Consumers' Association of Ireland, said yesterday's World Consumer Rights Day was an ideal opportunity to highlight the potential damage **junk food** advertising was having on children's health.

'The Consumers' Association of Ireland stresses that, by allowing unhealthy **food** to be regularly marketed to our **children**, this presents a direct threat to their wellbeing.

'It instils in them poor choice of diet which is potentially damaging to their future health and that of their children.'