

Exposing Junk Food Ads: How to complain about advertising targeting children

Angela Culpin¹, Sally Mackay², and Janell Dymus³

¹ Auckland Regional Public Health Service

² University of Auckland

³ Hapai Te Hauora

Healthy Auckland Together (HAT) is a group of 26 organisations representing local government, mana whenua, health agencies, NGOs, university and consumer interest groups. HAT focuses on the whole system, creating environments that encourage good nutrition and physical activity through policy change, advocacy and infrastructure design and planning. This workshop will demonstrate effective collaboration through showcasing how HAT partner organisations are working together to take action on the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks to children and are building the case for change.

Reducing children's exposure to unhealthy food advertising is a key step to reducing childhood obesity. There is clear evidence that children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing influences their food choices and can contribute towards unhealthy weight.

Marketing in New Zealand is self-regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA codes cover some aspects of marketing but do not go far enough to adequately protect children from pervasive messaging. An increase in the number of complaints to the ASA shows public discontent and supports the need for greater advertising restrictions such as sponsorship and brand only marketing and packaging.

Workshop participants will gain knowledge of the impact of marketing on children, the tactics that industry uses to increase sales, and effective policy measures. Key components of the ASA codes will be discussed. Using examples, participants will be able to identify advertisements that breach these codes. With support from the facilitators, workshop participants will get the opportunity to actively work through the process of making a complaint to the ASA. The workshop will also discuss ways of building community action on this issue. Overall, participants will gain a greater understanding of marketing to children and how to be actively engaged in creating change.