

Unhealthy Food Commercials on Brazilian TV

Determining and monitoring the amount of unhealthy food commercials on TV is relevant to the prevention and control of obesity. The aim of this study was to determine the proportion of unhealthy food commercials on Brazilian TV and compare it with preexisting data on the frequency and quality of the advertised products. We recorded 14 hours of programming from the three basic Brazilian TV channels with the largest audiences (total=378 hrs.). Commercials were classified into 25 categories based on the type of product advertised. We compared the proportions of the types of commercials and types of food using the Pearson Chi-square test. Food commercials constitute the category with the second highest amount of airtime at 720 hours (9%), lagging behind the respective channels' TV programming advertising at 1958 hours (26%). Compared with previous data from 2002, the proportion of food commercials on TV decreased by 12%. However, commercials for unhealthy food increased by 16%. These results have implications for the development of contingency plans and public policies aimed at reducing the risks of exposure to unhealthy food commercials on TV.