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**Health costs of obesity soaring as junk food companies pour millions into advertising**

New analysis reveals:

* Top spending crisp, confectionary and sugary drinks brands put over **£143 million[[1]](#footnote-1)** a year into advertising their products
* This dwarfs the **£5.2 million[[2]](#footnote-2)** annual spend on Government’s flagship health eating campaign
* Meanwhile the NHS spends an estimated **£38 million[[3]](#footnote-3)** a year on weight loss surgery

Money spent last year on junk food advertising in the UK far outweighs the amount Government is able to spend on healthy eating campaigns, leading to an unbalanced environment pushing us towards unhealthy choices, according to new analysis by the Obesity Health Alliance (OHA) published on World Obesity Day.

Junk food brands are spending 27.5 times more on advertising their products than the amount available for the Government’s flagship healthy eating campaign – and as obesity rates soar, the NHS is having to spend more dealing with the consequences, with weight loss surgery alone costing an estimated six times the amount spent on the Change 4 Life campaign.

The UK’s obesity epidemic threatens to cripple the NHS financially, whilst putting the health of the nation at risk, says the group of more than 40 leading health charities, medical royal colleges and campaign groups. The OHA is calling on Government to close existing loopholes to restrict children’s exposure to junk food marketing across all media, including on TV prior to the 9pm watershed. There is clear evidence of the impact of junk food marketing on obesity – with a recent study by Cancer Research UK[[4]](#footnote-4) finding that adverts make children ‘ hungry’ and ‘tempted.’

Latest figures show that:

* The top 18 spending crisp, confectionary and sugary drinks brands put over **£143 million** a year into advertising
* Government spent **£5.2m** last year on its Change4Life healthy eating campaign
* The NHS spends an estimated **£38 million** a year on weight loss surgery – although surgery can be cost saving in the longer term
* Treating obesity relating conditions is estimated to cost the NHS **£5.1 billion** a year[[5]](#footnote-5)

Caroline Cerny, OHA Lead, said:

“It’s like a very unbalanced diet – with children’s health getting a raw deal. Junk food companies are spending tens of millions of pounds a year on promoting their products. Government healthy eating campaigns can’t possibly compete. There’s only ever going to be one winner – so it’s not surprising that the cost of obesity both to people’s health, the NHS and wider society, is spiralling out of control. Something needs to be done urgently to redress the balance.”

The OHA also wants to see marketing rules extended to cover sponsorship of sports, family attractions and marketing communications in schools.

Malcolm Clark, Coordinator of the Children’s Food Campaign added:

“Investing in prevention is important – the fewer people who are overweight or obese, the fewer obesity related conditions they will suffer and the less cost there will be to the NHS. The soft drinks industry levy and reformulation programmes are key to changing the nation’s diet, but without more effective restrictions on junk food advertising, any attempts to promote healthy living are never going to work.

“The role of advertising in driving us towards unhealthy foods cannot be underestimated, especially when it comes to children. This is why chocolate and crisps brands are pumping millions into advertising every year. We need the Government to go further to protect children from junk food marketing and to safeguard their future health and to avoid having to spend millions dealing with the consequences down the line.”

**Ends.**

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**Notes to editors**

Information was collected from The Grocer Top 100 Advertising Spend: FMCG Brands. The analysis identifies brands which are commonly associated with crisps, confectionary or sugary drinks products; however there may be exceptions where a brand’s advertising spend could include a product that is not crisps, confectionary or sugary drinks.

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| **THIS YEAR'S RANK** | **BRANDS** | **HOLDING COMPANIES** | **2016 (£M)** |
| 7 | Cadbury Dairy Milk | Mondelez International | £12.30 |
| 10 | Coca-Cola | Coca-Cola | £11.10 |
| 14 | Galaxy | Mars UK | £10.50 |
| 15 | Cadbury | Mondelez International | £10.40 |
| 18 | Maltesers | Mars UK | £9.40 |
| 24 | Lucozade Energy | Suntory Holdings | £8.70 |
| 27 | Walkers Crisps | PepsiCo | £8.50 |
| 32 | Kinder | Ferrero UK | £8.10 |
| 38 | Pepsi | Britvic | £7.50 |
| 39 | Haribo | Haribo Dunhills | £7.30 |
| 48 | Kit Kat | Nestle | £6.70 |
| 51 | M&M's | Mars UK | £6.60 |
| 58 | Ferrero | Ferrero UK | £6.20 |
| 75 | Lindt Lindor | Chocoladefabriken Lindt & Sprungli | £5.20 |
| 76 | Werther's Original | August Storck KG | £5.20 |
| 77 | Mars Confectionery | Mars UK | £5.10 |
| 83 | McVitie's Digestives | Yildiz Holding | £4.90 |
| 85 | Doritos | PepsiCo | £4.80 |
| 88 | Lindt Excellence | Chocoladefabriken Lindt & Sprungli | £4.70 |

1. Top 100 HFSS brands in 2016 - <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/attachment?storycode=550799&attype=T&atcode=113157> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ChangeforLife 2016 budget as confirmed by Pubic Health England [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Initial cost of weight loss surgery to NHS is around £6,000 (<https://www.nice.org.uk/news/article/offer-weight-loss-surgery-to-diabetics>). In 2015/16, there were 6,438 Finished Consultant Episodes (FCE’s) in NHS hospitals with a primary diagnosis of obesity and a main or secondary procedure of bariatric surgery (<http://www.content.digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB23742>) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/2016-07-05-junk-food-advertising-is-too-tempting-for-children> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Scarborough P, Bhatnagar P, Wickramasinghe KK et al. The economic burden of ill health due to diet, physical inactivity, smoking, alcohol and obesity in the UK: an update to 2006/07 NHS costs. J Public Health (Oxon) 2011;33(4):527-35.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)