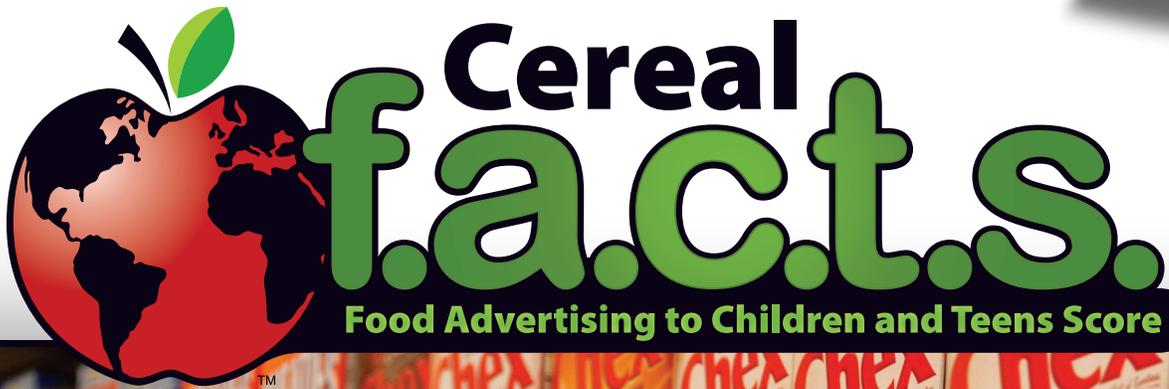


Full report at:
www.CerealFacts.org



Nutrition and Marketing Ratings of Children's Cereals



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bad News: There is no ambiguity in the results of this report. The least healthy cereals are the ones most marketed to children, and overall, children are exposed to a vast amount of marketing for highly-sugared cereals, more than for any other category of packaged food.

What was once a simple marketing landscape—television advertising during cartoons—has morphed into a complex web of persuasive messages even adults may not perceive as marketing. Internet games and marketing through social media such as Facebook are just the beginning and do not capture digital advances that will occur in the future.

The cereals marketed to children fail every reasonable nutrition test, yet according to the food industry are “better-for-you” foods. Eleven of the 13 cereals advertised most to children on television are also marketed heavily on the internet. Not one qualifies for inclusion in the food package for the USDA Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Not one could be advertised to children on television in the UK. Yet all qualify as “better-for-you” foods according to industry-derived standards brokered by the Council of Better Business Bureaus and qualify for the industry-funded “Smart Choices” designation.

The cereal companies speak to children often, do so in persuasive ways, begin marketing very early in children’s lives, and often reach children when parents are not looking.

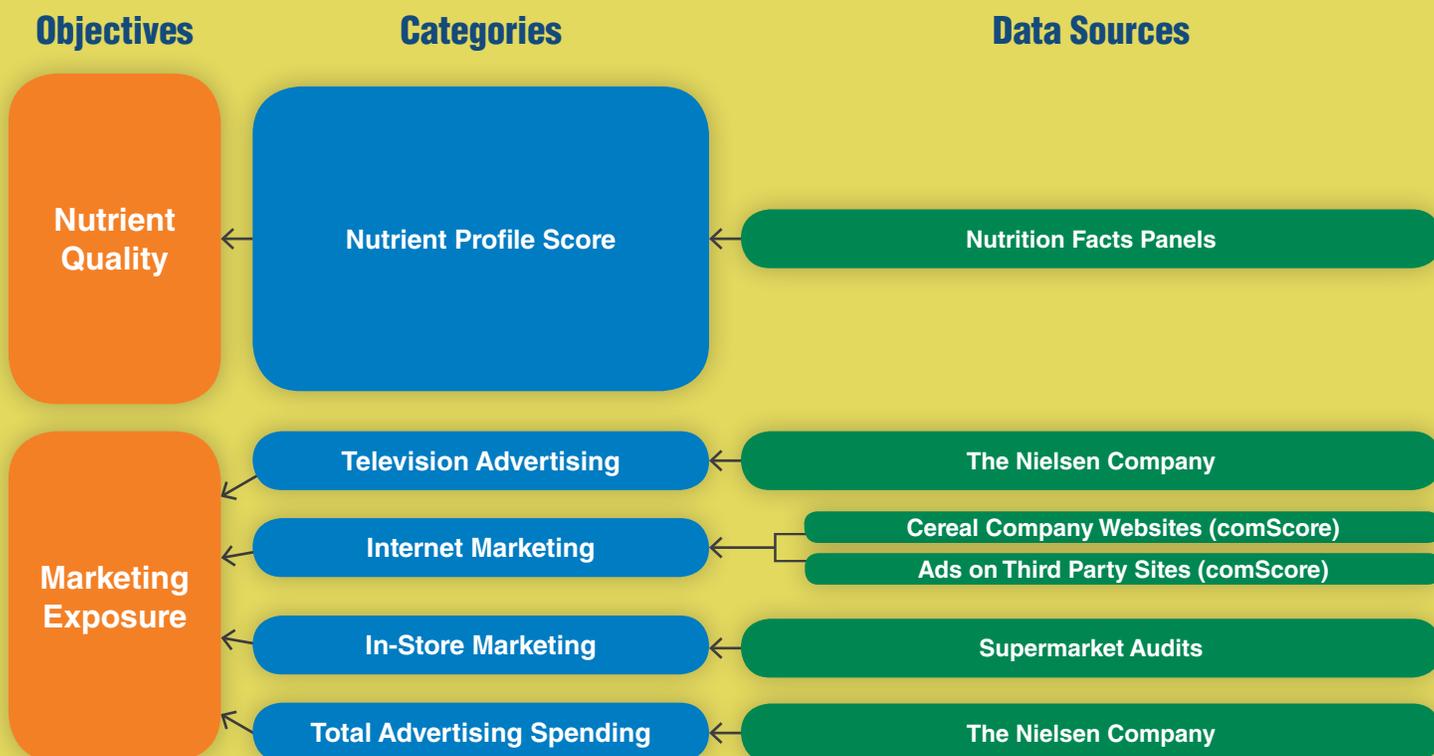
The Better News: It need not be this way. Most cereals marketed to children are high in sugar, high in sodium, and low in fiber. Many are highly colorful because of artificial dyes, making healthier cereals, very literally, pale in comparison. Yet, every cereal company does have products that earn good nutrition scores, but these are marketed to adults, not children.

Reinforcing the myth that children will not eat low-sugar cereals, the industry has funded a number of studies that find that highly-sweetened cereal is good for children, especially when compared to having no breakfast at all. Breakfast is good—make no mistake—but a breakfast with less sugar, more fiber, and less sodium will be better for children.

A new study delivers good news. Research conducted at Yale* shows that children *will* eat low-sugar cereals when they are provided. Children given low-sugar cereal ate the cereal in appropriate amounts, and even when allowed to add table sugar, consumed less sugar overall compared to children given highly-sweetened cereals (who ate twice the recommended serving size). Children liked their cereal equally whether it was highly sugared or not.

This comprehensive report is a first step in quantifying the marketing and nutrition impact of cereals marketed to children. The hope is that cereal companies, whether by choice or mandate, will make rapid and sustained progress toward marketing only healthy cereals, as defined by objective nutrition standards, to children and adolescents.

*Schwartz, M.B. Paper presented at the annual meeting of The Obesity Society, Washington, D.C., October, 2009



Advertised Cereals with the Poorest Nutrition Ratings

1. Reese's Puffs
2. Corn Pops
3. Lucky Charms
4. Cinnamon Toast Crunch
4. Cap'n Crunch (tied)
6. Trix
6. Froot Loops (tied)
6. Fruity and Cocoa Pebbles (tied)
9. Cocoa Puffs
10. Cookie Crisp

Most Frequently Marketed to Children on Television*

1. Cinnamon Toast Crunch
2. Honey Nut Cheerios
3. Lucky Charms
4. Cocoa Puffs
5. Trix
6. Frosted Flakes
7. Fruity and Cocoa Pebbles
8. Reese's Puffs
9. Corn Pops
10. Froot Loops

Most Frequently Marketed to Children on the Internet**

1. Trix
2. Lucky Charms
3. Honey Nut Cheerios
4. Fruity and Cocoa Pebbles
5. Honey Comb
6. Reese's Puffs
7. Apple Jacks
8. Froot Loops
9. Corn Pops
10. Frosted Flakes

Overall Company Scores

	# of Brands Marketed Directly to Children	Average Nutrition Score***	\$ Spent Marketing Child Cereals*
General Mills	8	40	\$107 million
Kellogg	6	42	\$39 million
Post	2	42	\$10 million
Quaker	1	37	< \$0.2 million

* The Nielsen Company, 2008 data; ** comScore Media Metrix Key Measures Report ; *** See page 4

KEY FINDINGS

- Compared to cereals marketed to adults, those marketed to children have **85% more sugar, 65% less fiber, and 60% more sodium**. Together, cereal companies spend more than **\$156 million per year marketing to children**.
- Products with poor nutrition ratings such as Lucky Charms, Reese's Puffs, and Cookie Crisp average **three to four health claims on every box**. Most cereals with the worst nutrition ratings are classified as "better-for-you" or "Smart Choices" by the companies.
- Of the **ten cereals with the worst overall impact** (nutrition and marketing scores combined), six are products from General Mills, three are from Kellogg, and one is from Post.
- The average *preschooler* sees 642 cereal ads per year just on television, almost all for cereals with the worst nutrition ratings.*
- The Millsberry.com website from General Mills averages 767,000 young visitors per month and Postopia.com averages 265,000 young visitors. The vast majority of pages on these sites feature cereals with poor nutrition ratings.**
- Cereal company websites are highly engaging. Young people visiting the sites remain there a long time, an average of **23.7 minutes per visit** in the case of Millsberry.com. Cereal products are often turned into toys or playthings on these sites and are associated with fun and in some cases, good health. Cereals with poor nutrition scores are also advertised on Nickelodeon, Disney, and Cartoon Network websites.
- Cereal companies have made only slight progress in reformulating their products, dropping the average sugar content of cereals marketed to children from three-and-a-half to three teaspoons of sugar per serving.
- The cereal companies all have products that receive good nutrition scores, but few are marketed to children. **Research shows that children will eat the healthier cereals.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cereals marketed to children should meet objective nutrition standards that have children's health as the aim. We recommend those used by the UK Food Standards Agency, which are based on research by scientists at Oxford University.

If the food industry is to be considered a trustworthy public health partner, it must adopt meaningful standards that stop "gaming the system." Self-regulatory pledges by the cereal companies have thus far been weak and have not shielded children from a barrage of messages to eat the least healthy products. Self-regulation by industry should not forestall needed government action.

Companies have made various pledges to market only healthier products in "children's media," but define this media so narrowly that vast numbers of children are exposed to marketing of the least healthy products while they are watching media not specifically targeted to children. Products failing to meet nutrition standards should not be marketed when either the percentage of children in an audience exceeds a defined level or the number of children in an audience reaches a defined level. Standards should be set by an objective body such as the Institute of Medicine.

It is critical that efforts to decrease the harm done by marketing unhealthy foods to children do not inadvertently encourage companies to find new promotion strategies that fall outside of the monitoring radar. Companies should be held accountable for the impact of their products on children and for not having made meaningful changes through self-regulation. Government's role is to define and monitor this harm in ways that ensure that companies make substantial improvements to the quality of products they sell and market for children's consumption.

Overall Rankings of Children's Cereals

Worse

Nutrition Score*	Cereal	Company	Heavy Child Marketing		
			Television Advertising	Advergaming Websites	Other Youth Websites
34	Reese's Puffs	General Mills	x	x	x
36	Corn Pops	Kellogg	x	x	x
36	Lucky Charms	General Mills	x	x	x
36	Golden Grahams	General Mills			
37	Cinnamon Toast Crunch	General Mills	x	x	x
37	Cap'n Crunch	Quaker		x	
38	Count Chocula	General Mills			
38	Trix	General Mills	x	x	x
38	Froot Loops	Kellogg	x	x	x
38	Smorz	Kellogg			
38	Fruity or Cocoa Pebbles	Post	x	x	x
39	Cocoa Puffs	General Mills	x	x	
40	Cookie Crisp	General Mills	x	x	
40	Apple Jacks	Kellogg	x	x	x
40	Cookie Crunch	Kellogg			
43	Frosted Flakes	Kellogg	x		x
44	Disney High School Musical	Kellogg			
44	Rice or Cocoa Krispies	Kellogg			
44	Mini-Swirlz	Kellogg			
44	Honey Nut Os	Cascadian Farm			
44	Honey Nut Cheerios	General Mills	x	x	x
44	Waffle Crisp	Post			
44	Chex	General Mills			
46	Honey Smacks	Kellogg			
46	Purely O's	Cascadian Farm			
46	Alpha Bits	Post			
46	Golden Crisp	Post			
46	Honeycomb	Post	x	x	x
48	Raisin Bran	Post			
50	Dora the Explorer	General Mills			
50	Cinnamon Crunch	Cascadian Farm			
51	Bunnies	Annie's			
51	EnviroKids Organic	Nature's Path			
51	Puffins	Barbara's Bakery			
52	Cheerios (except Honey Nut)	General Mills			
53	Kix	General Mills			
53	Life	Quaker			
54	Hannah Montana	Kellogg			
54	Clifford Crunch	Cascadian Farm			
56	Mighty Bites	Kashi			
56	Honey Sunshine	Kashi			
58	Organic Wild Puffs	Barbara's Bakery			
72	Mini-Wheats	Kellogg			

Better

* The nutrition score is based on the nutrient profiling system developed by Rayner and colleagues at Oxford University and used by the Food Standards Agency in the United Kingdom as the basis for determining which products can be marketed to children on television, and used in Australia as a basis for determining whether health claims can be made. Scores range from 0 – 100. A food scoring 62 or greater is defined as a healthy product. Details are provided in the full report at: www.CerealFacts.org.