

Defining Foods of Poor Nutritional Quality^{1,2}

Few people would be concerned if ads encouraged young kids to eat apples, whole wheat bread, and low-fat milk. Unfortunately, most ads are for sugary cereals, candy, fast-food and other foods of poor nutritional quality. CSPI's definition of poor nutritional quality is a compromise approach. It allows for the marketing of products that may not be nutritionally ideal but that provide some positive nutritional benefit and that could help children meet the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (i.e., limit calories, saturated and trans fat, sodium, and added sugars).

Foods of poor nutritional quality meet one or more of the following criteria:

- > 35% of total calories from **fat**, excluding nuts, seeds, & peanut or other nut butters
- > 10% of calories from **saturated + trans fat**
- > 35% **added sugars** by weight³
- > 230 mg **sodium** per serving of chips, crackers, cheeses, baked goods, French fries, other snacks
- > 480 mg **sodium** per serving for cereals, soups, pastas, and meats
- > 600 mg **sodium** for pizza, sandwiches, and main dishes
- > 770 mg **sodium** for meals

And do not contain any of the following:

- 10% of the Daily Value (DV) of **vitamins A or C, calcium, iron, or fiber**
- Half a serving of **fruit or vegetable**
- 51% or more (by weight) **whole grain** ingredients

Beverages of poor nutritional quality include:

- Soft drinks, sports drinks, and sweetened iced teas
- Fruit-based drinks with <50% real fruit juice or that contain added sweeteners
- Beverages containing caffeine, excluding low-fat or fat-free chocolate milk (which contain trivial amounts of caffeine)
- High-fat milk (whole or 2%)

Portion size limits:

- **Individual foods and beverages (except fruits and vegetables)** - more than the standard serving size used for Nutrition Facts labels
- **Meals** - more than 1/3 of the daily calorie requirement for target audience (which is 500 calories for moderately active 4- to 8-year-olds)

¹These nutrition standards were adapted from those developed by the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA), a coalition of more than 300 health, nutrition, and other organizations and from CSPI's *Guidelines for Responsible Food Marketing to Children*.

²In ads in which multiple products are shown, no product may be for a food of poor nutritional quality. For overall brand marketing, the marketing is considered to promote foods of poor nutritional quality if more than 50% of the brand's products/meals meet the criteria for poor nutritional quality.

³Since most fruit snacks contain some fruit juice, it is difficult from the Nutrition Facts labels to distinguish fruit sugars from added sugars. We assessed fruit snacks' nutritional quality using the amount of total sugars displayed on the label.