

## Re: Are we protected from Junk Food Corporations?

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"David vs. Goliath"

A most important article. It shows that Americans have little chance against advertising, which outspends government "healthy guidelines" hundreds of times.

This is no joke...

"The government's entire budget on nutrition education is estimated at just a fifth of the advertising budget for Altoids mints"

And I hope this is serious...

"No matter how it happens, though, nutrition activists say corporate America must bear some responsibility for obesity."

Whose Fault Is Fat?

Experts Weigh Holding Food Companies Responsible for Obesity

By Geraldine Sealey

So we're fat --61 percent of us. We're gluttons, supersizing our fries and indulging in whopper-sized cinnamon buns at the mall.

But obesity is not just an American image crisis --it's fast becoming our most serious public health problem. Indeed, obesity now rivals smoking in its deadliness and is linked to diseases such as type-2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of cancer.

An estimated 300,000 Americans die each year from fat-related causes, and we spent \$117 billion in obesity-related economic costs just last year, U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher reported last month.

Conventional wisdom says our obesity stems from laziness, lack of willpower or a fast-paced lifestyle that prevents healthy eating and exercise. We already spend up to an estimated \$50 billion a year on

diet and weight loss products —are we really just not trying hard enough?

While individuals surely bear responsibility for what they eat and whether they move, some nutrition and legal experts say we may not be entirely at fault.

Some say the food industry —particularly fast food, vending machine and processed food companies— should be held accountable for playing a role in the declining health of the nation, just as the tobacco industry ultimately was forced to bear responsibility for public health costs associated with smoking in its landmark \$206 billion settlement with the states.

Although no one is taking such legal action against the food industry, nutrition and legal experts say it is reasonable to think that someday, it may come to that.

"There is a movement afoot to do something about the obesity problem, not just as a visual blight but to see it in terms of costs," says John Banzhaf, a George Washington University Law School professor.

#### The Case for Fat Suits

Most public health experts agree that regulations or taxes would be better than legal action, but they are mindful that after years of going after Big Tobacco, anti-smoking forces only achieved success when plaintiffs and lawyers stepped in.

No matter how it happens, though, nutrition activists say corporate America must bear some responsibility for obesity.

They point to a David and Goliath–like imbalance between the government's nutrition education spending and the food industry's \$30 billion advertising budget. Only 2 percent of the industry's ad dollars go to promote fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans, according to watchdog group Center for Science in the Public Interest. Most ads lure Americans toward high-fat, high-calorie, large-portion food.

While McDonald's reportedly spent \$500 million on the "We love to see you smile" ad campaign, the National Cancer Institute's "5-a-Day" campaign spends about \$1 million a year to promote eating five daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

The government's entire budget on nutrition education is estimated at just a fifth of the advertising budget for Altoids mints, says Marion Nestle, a New York University professor and author of the soon-to-be released *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Manipulates What We Eat to the Detriment of Our Health*.

sci.med.nutrition: Re: Are we protected from Junk Food Corporations?

"It's not fair," Nestle said. "People are confronted with food in every possible way to eat more. The function of the food industry is to get people to eat more, not less."

to be continued...

<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/D...lame020122.html>