It’s Time to Can the “We Can: Go, Slow, Whoa” Categories CFBAI Refutes Article in American Journal of Preventative Medicine

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The research tool used in this report is significantly flawed, making the results inaccurate and inherently meaningless. The simplistic “Go, Slow, Whoa” categories are outdated. They don’t reflect either the government’s leading advice on nutrition in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, or the government’s standards for foods served to children in the School Breakfast and School Lunch programs. It’s time to can the “We Can” categories used in this report.

Contrary to this report, progress under the Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative has been substantial. The Federal Trade Commission, which has extensively studied food marketing to children, has commended our progress.

For one thing, the major candy companies have all stopped advertising to children. Second, the foods being advertised to kids are healthier than ever. Take cereals, one of the foods frequently advertised to kids. A serving contains a modest number of calories (generally 130 calories) and is full of nutrients. Before our program started, some cereals had as much as 15 grams of sugar per serving. To be advertised to children, they now can have no more than 10 grams of sugar, and many have even less. At the same time, their whole grain content has gone up.

This report doesn’t capture any of these changes, which are big steps forward.

You don’t need to be a nutritionist to know that a system that says “whoa” to any cereal with sugar is out to lunch. The USDA and the American Academy of Pediatrics recognize the useful role of sugar to make nutritionally dense foods palatable to children. Those amounts should be reasonable, of course, and CFBAI has set reasonable limits.

The foods advertised by our participants – as a single item, an ingredient or a meal component – include yogurt and yogurt drinks, smoothies, fruit, 100% fruit juice, vegetables, fat-free and low-fat milk, and whole-grain foods.

At the end of the day, it is up to parents to decide what to feed their children. Our program helps parents by ensuring that foods advertised to children meet solid nutrition standards. While the boxes and packaging might look the same, what’s inside has changed... a lot.