
Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood

Parents Beware: SpongeBob Movie Rife With Commercialism

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Citing the film's promotions with Burger King, Kellogg's, and Keebler, the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC) is warning parents to beware of the excessive and harmful levels of commercialism in the new SpongeBob SquarePants Movie.

"This movie is essentially a ninety minute commercial for junk food," said CCFC's Dr. Susan Linn, author of *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*. "Parents who take their children to see the film should expect to be besieged with requests for products from the movie's promotional partners."

Burger King is offering exclusive SpongeBob toys and watches at its restaurants. Kellogg's and Keebler have launched several SpongeBob products to coincide with the movie, including Kellogg's SpongeBob SquarePants Movie Cereal, Keebler SpongeBob SquarePants Movie E.L. Fudge Cookies, Kellogg's SpongeBob SquarePants Movie Rice Krispie Treats, and Kellogg's SpongeBob SquarePants Pop Tarts.

It has become commonplace for media characters popular with children to adorn the packages of food products of dubious nutritional value. Ever since rising to superstardom on Nickelodeon, SpongeBob SquarePants has been ubiquitous in grocery stores. In 2002, SpongeBob macaroni and cheese was Kraft's top-selling pasta brand. SpongeBob also fronts for products such as SpongeBob SquarePants cereal, Cheez-Its, and Wild Bubble-Berry Pop Tarts.

Marketing to children is a factor in childhood obesity. A number of children's health organizations – including the American Academy of Pediatrics – have called for restrictions on food marketing to children. The Institute of Medicine recently called for a national conference to develop guidelines for the advertising of foods and beverages directed at children.

Psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint of the Judge Baker Children's Center hopes that parents will factor in the film's commercial ties when deciding whether or not to let their children see SpongeBob on the big screen. "The cost of this movie is more than the price of a ticket. The nagging that marketers deliberately and effectively cultivate can be extremely stressful for families. And for those parents who give in, there are the potential costs of childhood obesity and its attendant health problems."

The Campaign For A Commercial-Free Childhood (formerly Stop Commercial Exploitation of Children) is a national coalition of health care professionals, educators, advocacy groups and concerned parents who counter the harmful effects of marketing to children through action, advocacy, education, research, and collaboration among organizations and individuals who care about children. CCFC supports the rights of children to grow up – and the rights of parents to raise them – without being undermined by rampant consumerism. For more information, please visit: www.commercialfreechildhood.org