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**BAN ADVERTISING AND MARKETING OF JUNK FOOD,  
 SUGARY DRINKS TO CHILDREN**  
*AMA Position Statement on Nutrition 2018*

Advertising and marketing of junk food and sugary drinks to children should be banned, and a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages should be introduced as a matter of priority, the AMA says.

Releasing the *AMA Position Statement on Nutrition 2018*, AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that eating habits and attitudes toward food are established in early childhood.

“Improving the nutrition and eating habits of Australians must become a priority for all levels of government,” Dr Gannon said.

“Governments should consider the full complement of measures available to them to support improved nutrition, from increased nutrition education and food literacy programs through to mandatory food fortification, price signals to influence consumption, and restrictions on food and beverage advertising to children.

“Eating habits and attitudes start early, and if we can establish healthy habits from the start, it is much more likely that they will continue throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

“The AMA is alarmed by the continued, targeted marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks to children.

“Children are easily influenced, and this marketing – which takes place across all media platforms, from radio and television to online, social media, and apps - undermines healthy food education and makes eating junk food seem normal.

“Advertising and marketing unhealthy food and drink to children should be prohibited altogether, and the loophole that allows children to be exposed to junk food and alcohol advertising during coverage of sporting events must be closed.

“The food industry claims to subscribe to a voluntary code, but the reality is that this kind of advertising is increasing. The AMA calls on the food industry to stop this practice immediately.”

The Position Statement also calls for increased nutrition education and support to be provided to new or expecting parents, and notes that good nutrition during pregnancy is also vital.

It recognises that eating habits can be affected by practices at institutions such as child care centres, schools, hospitals, and aged care homes.

“Whether people are admitted to hospital or just visiting a friend or family member, they can be very receptive to messages from doctors and other health workers about healthy eating,” Dr Gannon said.

“Hospitals and other health facilities must provide healthy food options for residents, visitors, and employees.

“Vending machines containing sugary drinks and unhealthy food options should be removed from all health care settings, and replaced with machines offering only healthy options.

“Water should be the default beverage option, including at fast food restaurants in combination meals where soft drinks are typically provided as the beverage.”

**Key Recommendations:**

- Advertising and marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children to be prohibited.
- Water to be provided as the default beverage option, and a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages to be introduced.
- Healthy foods to be provided in all health care settings, and vending machines containing unhealthy food and drinks to be removed.
- Better food labelling to improve consumers’ ability to distinguish between naturally occurring and added sugars.
- Regular review and updating of national dietary guidelines and associated clinical guidelines to reflect new and emerging evidence.
- Continued uptake of the Health Star Rating system, as well as refinement to ensure it provides shoppers with the most pertinent information.

The AMA *Position Statement on Nutrition 2018* is available at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/nutrition-2018>

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