

Kellogg's: A Sad Cereal Sellout

By ACSH Staff — June 17, 2007

This piece first appeared *in the* [\[1\] New York Post](#) [\[1\]](#) and was reprinted June 19 by Canada's National Post:

This month, Kellogg's did a *mea culpa* for the implied nutritional deficiencies of their popular cereals, including Froot Loops, Apple Jacks, and Cocoa Krispies.

The famed cereal maker from Battle Creek, MI (which started out almost a century ago as a health food company) is now pleading guilty in the court of public opinion to charges that it is partly responsible for our childhood obesity epidemic and other nutrition-related woes.

Kellogg's is now publicly holding hands with the Ralph Nader-inspired, industry-loathing Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI, a.k.a. "the food police") in condemning pre-sweetened cereals. The manufacturer has now agreed (following the threat of a lawsuit by CSPI and the Campaign for Commercial-Free Childhood) to stop using licensed characters such as Shrek to promote its cereals -- and to phase out advertising to children under age twelve unless the cereals are low in calories, sugar, and salt.

So now it appears that Kellogg's is nominating its own cereal for induction into the Junk Food Hall of Shame. But is cereal junk?

In addressing that question, I am reminded of a *New Yorker* cartoon I saw years ago: a well attired gentleman sitting in front of his cereal bowl, gazing at the product's nutrition label, and exclaiming, "Now that I've had 100% of my required daily allowances of everything, I'm going back to bed!!"

In contrast to the *mea culpas* made this week by Kellogg's -- and their new anti-corporate friends -- these are the facts:

First, today's fortified cereals are sources of excellent nutrition for kids and adults. My late colleague Dr. Fredrick J. Stare, founder of the Harvard Department of Nutrition and co-founder of the group I run, the American Council on Science and Health, was the first to suggest over fifty years ago that cereal manufacturers fortify their products with beneficial nutrients -- scrawling the idea that became Special K on the back of a napkin to explain it to a Kellogg's executive.

Second, pre-sweetened cereals do provide calories, but for non-obese kids, calories can be a good thing -- they provide energy. And if the cereal is not pre-sweetened, the child may just do the sweetening with scoops from the sugar bowl -- often adding even more sugar than there would have been in a pre-sweetened product.

Sugar on cereal -- particularly when eaten in conjunction with milk -- is not a threat to dental health. Unlike, say, a bagel, it does not adhere to teeth and cause decay. Further, cereal is an excellent source of fiber, not to mention the many nutrients it provides. The bottom line is that cereal -- pre-

sweetened or not -- is a nutrient-dense product, so you get a lot for that caloric intake, far more than you would with, say, fruit juice.

Third, pre-sweetened cereal should be a low priority target in our war against childhood obesity (overeating all day and lack of exercise are the real problems). But even if cereal were the problem, why did Kellogg's not simply pledge to use a low-calorie sweetener instead of sugar in some of its cereals -- and thereby give parents a choice?

I think the answer is this: corporations today are acting more politically correct than ever, joining whenever they can with their harshest critics. They are appeasing their foes -- and abandoning science in the process.

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