AAP s junk stance on fast food ads

By ACSH Staff — June 28, 2011

Quick, run for cover: junk food ads are out to get your children and make them fat. Or at least that s what the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is now preaching. As described [1] in a new policy statement published in the journal *Pediatrics*, the AAP s Dr. Victor Strasburger asserted, It s time for the food industry to clean up its act and not advertise junk food to young children.

Allow me to interject here, but what exactly does the AAP consider to be junk food? ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan asks. Though he doesn t explicitly define junk food, Dr. Strasburger does believe that just by banning ads for fast food, one study says we could decrease obesity and overweight by 17 percent.

However, if you keep reading, you ll soon discover that the obesity epidemic is more aptly attributed to excess screen time among children, which ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross says, the AAP has slyly conflated with so-called junk food ads. Since the obesity epidemic began approximately ten years ago when advertisements marketed toward children had already been around for decades junk food ads clearly cannot be responsible for the obesity epidemic. Yet the AAP avoids this issue altogether, blaming junk food ads instead of the drastic shift from healthful athletic and recreational activities toward screen-oriented leisure activities a phenomenon of the 21st century, unlike TV food ads.

ACSH s Alyssa Pelish believes that, in addition to excess sedentary behavior, the growth in portion sizes over the years has made a substantial contribution to the problem.

Dr. Ross observes that, although the AAP would like to be able to lay the blame squarely on someone or something, it s we parents who are really to blame for allowing our children to watch TV and sit in front of a computer screen for hours at a time. That s the real problem not so-called junk food ads, he says.