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PETALING JAYA: It comes in a variety of flavours. Its attractive and easy-to-eat packaging makes children simply love them.

But do children understand that junk food or snacks like potato chips, burgers and fries have high levels of fat, sugar or salt and are simply unhealthy?

Junior shopper: Six-year-old Kong Li Yao tallying his selected favourite goodies during the Kids Supermarket Sweep yesterday.

Loreina Gabriel, 13, knows that junk food is unhealthy but she still enjoys it.

I eat it because it is fun, said the shy girl whose favourite is cookies at the Kids Supermarket Sweep yesterday.

Tan Sze Yong, 10, said that she loves having junk food while watching television in the morning.

Malaysian Dieticians Association's Yong Wai Yew said that many children ended up consuming too much sugar and salt.

Consumer Research and Resource Centre chief executive Paul Selvaraj said the media played a huge role in influencing children to eat junk food.

A recent monitoring research of TV advertisements during children programme hours showed that 40% of the advertisements are on fast food and snacks.

Selvaraj told a press conference at the event by the centre and Fomca in conjunction with World Consumer Rights Day today and in support of the International Code on Marketing of Food to Children.

We want the Government to make the code part of the law because as a code, it remains just a guideline and no one will follow it, added Selvaraj.

The contents of the code include a blanket ban on radio or television of advertisements promoting unhealthy food, no marketing of unhealthy food via the new media and no usage of celebrities and cartoon characters to promote unhealthy food.

Fomca has also called on the Government to introduce a friendlier and more attractive labelling system to better inform consumers the hazards of junk food.

We are suggesting a system that is similar to traffic lights. Green is for healthy, yellow for medium and red is for not healthy, said Selvaraj.

A recent research by the US Food and Drug Administration found that snacks with high levels of fat, sugar or salt are best limited to a small portion of your diet.

Junk food which contains saturated fat increases blood cholesterol levels and therefore increases your risk of heart disease and some cancers.

Source:<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/3/15/nation/3485492&sec=nation>