The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity

Some of the proposed steps to help reverse the trend of childhood obesity are discussed in the following section.

Reduce or regulate food ads targeted to children
Policy suggestions to reduce or regulate food advertising targeted to children take a wide array of forms, from voluntary action taken by media companies or the food industry to government regulation.

Expand public education campaigns to promote healthy eating and more exercise
Another media strategy recommended by public health experts is for media companies and the government to adopt and expand public service campaigns aimed at young people, promoting healthy eating and an active lifestyle.

Incorporate messages about healthy eating into TV storylines
Public health officials have also suggested inserting obesity-related messages into storylines in TV programming, which they believe could have far-reaching implications for raising awareness about the obesity epidemic and motivating children and their parents to take action.

Support interventions to reduce the time children spend with media
The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no TV or videos for children under age 2, and suggests limiting children’s screen media time after that age to 1-2 hours of quality programming a day. In its recently issued policy statement about childhood obesity, the Academy advocates restricting television viewing as a specific strategy for preventing paediatric overweight and the risk of obesity.