Snack food advertising in stores around public schools in Guatemala.

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Obesity in school-age children is emerging as a public heath concern. Food marketing influences preferences and increases children's requests for food. This study sought to describe the type of snack foods advertised to children in stores in and around public schools and assess if there is an association between child-oriented snack food advertising and proximity to schools. All food stores located inside and within a 200 square meter radius from two preschools and two primary schools were surveyed. We assessed store type, number and type of snack food advertisements including those child-oriented inside and outside stores. We surveyed 55 stores and found 321 snack food advertisements. Most were on sweetened beverages (37%) and soft drinks (30%). Ninety-two (29%) were child-oriented. Atoles (100.0%), cereals (94.1%), and ice cream and frozen

desserts (71.4%) had the greatest proportion of child-oriented advertising. We found more child-oriented advertisements in stores that were closer (<170 m) to schools compared to those farther away. In conclusion, the food industry is flooding the market, taking advantage of the lack of strict regulation in Guatemala. Child-oriented advertisements are available in almost all stores within a short walking distance from schools, exposing children to an obesogenic environment.