



Binscombe Medical Centre

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Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd
33 Holborn
London
EC1N 2HT

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing concerning a simple matter of the way breakfast cereals are currently being promoted in your stores, as I am concerned about the marketing of certain types of breakfast cereal specifically to children, and the health implications associated with this.

Cereal manufacturers clearly develop some of their products for the children's market, and these are frequently characterised by high sugar content. Clearly you are not responsible for this, but you are able to dictate how these products are displayed in your store. Currently, in some of your stores (I am glad to say not all) there is a very clear label in the cereal aisle which differentiates "Children's Cereals" from other types of cereal. I believe this distinction to be unjustified and that it sends an unhelpful message regarding what is normal for a child's diet.

As a General Practitioner in Godalming, Surrey, I am frequently dismayed by the consequences of unhealthy eating in children – including childhood obesity, diabetes and dental problems. I am also aware of the strong correlation between the eating patterns developed in childhood and those which are carried with us for the rest of our lives. As one of Sainsbury's key Corporate Responsibilities is "Best for Food and Health" (<http://www2.sainsburys.co.uk/aboutus/policies/policies.htm>) I am sure you will agree with me that Sainsbury's will want to do everything it can to encourage healthy eating habits in children.

The endorsement of high sugar products as being primarily intended for children sends a powerful message that children can only be expected to eat 'healthy' foods if they are sugar-coated. Food manufacturers have been so successful in spreading this fallacy that many parents assume that plainer cereals, such as wheat biscuits, corn or bran-based cereals will not be accepted by their children. This is a tragedy, since these healthier alternatives are entirely suitable for children, and can be an extremely valuable part of any child's diet. The only reason why a cereal might not be suitable for children is that cereals which contain nuts are best avoided in children less than three years of age. I have written further concerning this matter on our practice blog (<http://www.binscombe.net/blog/?p=63> and <http://www.binscombe.net/blog/?p=191>).

I would be interested to hear your views on this matter, and would be extremely grateful for your support in helping to promote healthy eating in our local population by changing the way these items are displayed in the cereal aisle of your stores.

Yours faithfully,

Martin Brunet