A new report from the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity has found that kids are disproportionately targeted by food company websites using branded computer games, also known as advergames.

These findings come despite pledges by food companies to reduce marketing of unhealthy products to children, said Rudd in a January 9 release. Researchers also found that playing these games increases children’s consumption of junk food, according to the study, which was published online in the Journal of Children and Media.

“While research has shown a decline in television food advertisements targeted to children, companies are introducing new and sophisticated forms of marketing such as advergames that allow children to engage in advertising content for unlimited amounts of time,” said author Jennifer Harris, the Rudd Center’s director of marketing initiatives.

Rudd’s research demonstrates the reach and impact of advergames on children’s eating behaviors and underscores the need for substantial reductions in the use of advergames to promote unhealthy food to children.

According to the release, researchers conducted a two-tiered study to determine how many young people visit advergame websites and how much time they spend there; whether exposure to advergames for unhealthy products contributes to increased consumption of unhealthy food; and whether advergames that promote nutritious foods can positively influence children’s healthy food consumption.

In the first study, the team used Internet usage data from comScore to examine the number and age of visitors to food company websites and the relative usage of sites that contained advergames.

They found that more than 1 million children visit food company advergame sites every month and that they spend up to one hour per month on some sites.

“The majority of advergame sites promote candy, high-sugar cereals, and fast food, and many feature products that food companies have pledged they will not market to children,” Rudd reported. “Young people were significantly more engaged in these sites compared with other food company-sponsored websites, according to the study.”

The second study examined 152 children and measured how much snack food they consumed after playing advergames that featured unhealthy or healthy food, compared with playing computer games that did not focus on food. Advergames that promoted junk food increased the children’s consumption of unhealthy snack foods by 56% compared to playing the healthy games, and 16% more than playing the control games.
FDA seeks to limit antibiotic resistance of foodborne pathogens

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) said a move by the FDA to limit the use of the antibiotic cephalosporin is a “small step” in trying to prevent foodborne outbreaks from antibiotic-resistant pathogens. According to the FDA, on January 6, the agency’s Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) issued an order prohibiting certain uses of the cephalosporin class of antimicrobial drugs in food-producing animals, including cattle, swine, chickens, and turkeys.

In its order, the CVM is blocking “extra-label” or unapproved uses of cephalosporins. The ruling prohibits using cephalosporin drugs at unapproved dose levels, frequencies, durations, or routes of administration. It also prohibits using cephalosporins in cattle, swine, chickens, or turkeys that are not approved for use in that species, and using the drugs for disease prevention.

“The order prohibiting certain uses of cephalosporin in many food-producing animals is clearly warranted, though it may be too little, and it is definitely too late,” Caroline Smith DeWaal, food safety director at the CSPI, said in a statement. “CSPI has identified at least five foodborne outbreaks since 2001 linked to cephalosporin-resistant Salmonella, which resulted in at least 200 illnesses and one death.”

According to the FDA, the cephalosporin class of drugs is used to treat human diseases, such as pneumonia, skin and tissue infections, pelvic inflammatory disease, and other conditions.

“FDA is concerned that certain extra-label uses of cephalosporins in cattle, swine, chickens and turkeys are likely to contribute to cephalosporin-resistant strains of certain bacterial pathogens. If cephalosporins are not effective in treating human diseases from these pathogens, doctors may have to use drugs that are not as effective or that have greater side effects,” the FDA wrote in the release. Smith DeWaal noted that extra-label use of cephalosporin is only “a part of the problem.”

“FDA should act soon to restrict or eliminate all unnecessary uses of antibiotics critically important to human medicine, so they can be preserved for future generations,” she said.

“According to Dr. Margaret Chan, director-general of the World Health Organization, without urgent corrective action, ‘the world is on the brink of losing these miracle cures.’”

Visit http://tinyurl.com/6tqlge8 to view more information from the CVM or http://tinyurl.com/7q25rgh to view the CSPI statement.

SNAP numbers dip in October 2011

Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dropped by about 43,428 in October 2011, hitting 46.22 million participants in the food safety net program, according to a January 6 release from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). That drop, according to FRAC, was due in part to an end of temporary disaster SNAP benefits in several states that had been impacted by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. It still represented an increase of more than 3 million people compared with October 2010, FRAC noted.

USDA officials cited an improved labor market for some of the change, the organization said.

Increases in SNAP caseloads between October 2010 and October 2011 occurred in 47 states and the District of Columbia. The 10 states that registered the largest over-the-year percentage caseload increases were: New Jersey (26.9%), Minnesota (15.8%), Delaware (13.6%), Iowa (12.9%), Alaska (12.7%), Hawaii (12.6%), Maryland (12.6%), Colorado (12%), Nevada (10.7%), and Rhode Island (10.7%).

October 2011 caseload totals for Pennsylvania included SNAP benefits for victims of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. FRAC said that even with its current population of more than 43 million in the program, three in 10 people eligible for SNAP go unserved.

The number of people participating in SNAP in October 2011 was 29.3 million more than in July 2000, when program participation nationally reached its lowest point in the past decade (16.9 million individuals).

Visit http://tinyurl.com/5wfctwb to view the release.
FRAC report eyes access to healthy foods

A recent report by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) looks at how challenging it is for families to obtain health food—particularly for lower-income Americans.

According to a release on the report, *A Half Empty Plate: Fruit and Vegetable Affordability and Access Challenges in America*, which was released December 15, among all households across the years 2008–2010, 8.2% of respondents reported that it was “not easy to get affordable fresh fruits and vegetables.”

FRAC found that those with annual household incomes less than $24,000 reported such affordability and access challenges 2.5 times more frequently (13.8%) than those with incomes between $60,000 and $89,999 (5.7%).

The report, said FRAC, analyzed the answers given by hundreds of thousands of survey respondents to a question posed for the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project: “In the city or area where you live, is it easy or not easy to get affordable fresh fruits and vegetables?” FRAC characterizes “not easy” answers as evidence of an affordability and access challenge.

“A household’s ability to access healthy food hinges on having enough resources to do so. What the data in our analysis show is that access and affordability are household economic insecurity problems as well as community ‘food desert’ problems,” said Jim Weill, FRAC president. “The remedies have to centrally include supporting families’ ability to purchase healthier food.”

According to FRAC, households with food hardship faced additional challenges. Among those in households with food hardship (an inability to afford enough food based on another Gallup question), 18.5% reported affordability and accessibility problems, while only 5.7% of those in households without food hardship reported such challenges.

FRAC laid out other findings from the report, including:

- Hispanics and blacks reported considerably higher rates of difficulty in accessing affordable fresh fruits and vegetables compared to whites and Asians.
- Among people reporting poor health status, the prevalence of fruit and vegetable affordability and access challenges was four times that of people reporting excellent health status (20% vs. 5%).
- Of the top 15 hardest-hit states, four were in the Mountain Plains region (Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming), four were in the West (Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, and Nevada), and three were in the Southwest (Arkansas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma).
- Most of the metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) with the 20 worst rates were in the Southeast, Southwest, and West. More specifically, four of the 20 worst MSAs were in Florida, two were in Louisiana, and two were in Oklahoma.
- 133 congressional districts had at least one in 10 households with children reporting difficulty accessing affordable fresh fruits and vegetables.

FRAC made a number of recommendations in the report to help improve access to healthy foods, particularly for those in the lower income brackets.

“This community access is a legitimate and important concern, but it is only one piece of the larger picture,” researchers wrote. “What the findings in this report show is that access and affordability are household economic insecurity problems as well.”

To provide an adequate diet for families, there needs to be enough jobs and better wages for low-income workers, FRAC suggested, adding that “the job market is the first place to boost the purchasing power of households struggling for affordable, accessible healthy food.”

Where wages are not adequate, FRAC said, or where people don’t have jobs, public supports are crucial. This means strengthening programs like unemployment insurance, Supplemental Security Income, Social Security, and the refundable Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, as well as nutrition programs.

Lawmakers should increase benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and extend the program to people now excluded from benefits by eligibility rules; reduce unnecessary red tape that deters participation; and resist efforts to cut the programs as a false answer to the nation’s deficit problems, FRAC urged.

FRAC also noted that all households need convenient access to reasonably priced, healthy food. Many neighborhoods and towns across America lack decent-sized stores that sell a healthy variety of food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, at reasonable prices, FRAC said.

Visit [http://tinyurl.com/7zya2e](http://tinyurl.com/7zya2e) to view the release.
A diet high in fruits and vegetables is associated with a decreased risk for many chronic diseases and some cancers, and can aid in weight management.

Current daily fruit and vegetable recommendations for adolescents who participate in <30 minutes of physical activity daily are 1.5 cups of fruit and 2.5 cups of vegetables for females and 2 cups of fruit and 3 cups of vegetables for males (1 cup is approximately equal to one medium apple, eight strawberries, 12 baby carrots, or one large tomato).

However, recently published data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2003–2004 revealed that consumption was considerably below these levels.

To assess fruit and vegetable consumption among high school students, CDC analyzed data from the 2010 National Youth Physical Activity and Nutrition Study (NYPANS).

This report describes the results of that analysis, which indicated that, in 2010, the median number of times per day that high school students consumed fruits and vegetables was 1.2 for both.

For vegetables, the median number of times per day was lower for non-Hispanic black students (1.0) and Hispanic students (1.1) than non-Hispanic white students (1.4). Overall, 28.5% of high school students consumed fruit <1 time daily, and 33.2% of high school students consumed vegetables <1 time daily.

The infrequent fruit and vegetable consumption by high school students highlights the need for effective strategies to increase consumption.

Policy and environmental approaches to provide greater access to and availability of fruits and vegetables are among the strategies that schools and communities might choose to achieve this goal.

NYPANS includes a school-based survey conducted by CDC in 2010 to measure dietary and physical activity behaviors and behavioral determinants. A nationally
Data were weighted to provide national estimates, and statistical software was used to account for the complex sample design.

In 2010, the reported median consumption was 1.2 times per day for both fruits and vegetables.

Median daily fruit consumption was significantly higher among male (1.4) than female (1.2) students and significantly lower among students in the 10th (1.2) and 12th (1.2) grades than among ninth grade students (1.4).

Although fruit consumption did not differ by race/ethnicity, median daily vegetable consumption was significantly lower among non-Hispanic black (1.0) and Hispanic (1.1) students than non-Hispanic white students (1.4).

Median daily vegetable consumption did not vary significantly by sex or grade.

Overall, 28.5% of high school students consumed fruit <1 time daily, and 33.2% consumed vegetables <1 time daily.

Only 16.8% consumed fruit ≥4 times daily, and 11.2% of students consumed vegetables ≥4 times daily.

The infrequent fruit and vegetable consumption by high school students highlights the need for effective strategies to increase consumption.

The infrequent fruit and vegetable consumption by high school students highlights the need for effective strategies to increase consumption.

Policy and environmental approaches to increase fruit and vegetable access and availability at school and at other sites in the community where students spend time and purchase food are among the strategies that schools and communities might choose to achieve higher consumption of fruits and vegetables among high school students. The findings in this report are subject to at least three limitations.

First, because the survey is school-based, the results are representative only of high school students. In 2008, approximately 4% of persons aged 16–17 years old nationwide were not enrolled in a high school program or did not have a high school diploma or equivalent credential. Second, all results are based on self-report, and students might either overreport or underreport fruit and vegetable consumption because of social desirability or recall bias.

Finally, the questionnaire assessed the number of times per day that fruit and vegetables were consumed, not the portion sizes, so direct comparisons cannot be made with dietary recommendations based on cup measurements of fruit and vegetables.
The CDC on January 5 updated the numbers on the recent outbreak of *Salmonella Typhimurium* that’s been linked to ground beef from Hannaford Supermarkets.

The CDC said a total of 19 people have been infected from seven states: Hawaii (1), Kentucky (1), Massachusetts (1), Maine (4), New Hampshire (6), New York (5), and Vermont (1).

Contaminated ground beef was recalled from grocery stores but may still be in consumers’ homes, the CDC said. The outbreak strain of *Salmonella Typhimurium* is resistant to several commonly prescribed antibiotics, the agency said, and that may be associated with an increase in the risk of hospitalization or possible treatment failure in infected individuals. Among the 15 ill persons with available information, seven (47%) have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.

Visit [http://tinyurl.com/8xcwfyw](http://tinyurl.com/8xcwfyw) to view the latest news from the CDC.

According to a January 5 release from the United Nations’ World Food Program (WFP), the world’s “largest online hunger-fighting game,” Freerice.com, hit a historic milestone with 1 million registered players.

Freerice players have already donated nearly 100 billion grains of rice to the WFP since the game’s launch in 2007—enough to feed almost 5 million people for a day.

“‘When one million people each do their small part, the collective effect is beyond impressive—it’s extraordinary,’” said Nancy Roman, WFP director of communications, public policy, and private partnerships.

Freerice players can choose from 45,000 questions in various subjects, including vocabulary, flags of the world, and literature, and in six languages: English, Spanish, Italian, French, Chinese, and Korean. With each correct answer, 10 grains of rice are donated to WFP to feed hungry people around the world, paid for by sponsored banners on the site.

Visit [http://tinyurl.com/7fjnmdy](http://tinyurl.com/7fjnmdy) to view the release.

A coalition of 18 diabetes-related organizations suggests that America cannot stop the growing wave of type 2 diabetes—and its complications and costs—unless the recommendations for screening are broad enough to identify patients who are at risk for the disease.

Screening people at high risk for diabetes can identify those with prediabetes, who can be referred to low-cost, community-based diabetes prevention programs. Screening can also identify those who have diabetes but do not know it, and get them into treatment as early as possible, according to the Diabetes Advocacy Alliance (DAA).

“One of the most critical health challenges in 2012 is to fully address the grave danger that diabetes poses to the health of Americans and the health of the U.S. economy—and diabetes screening guidelines that are multiple risk-factor based are an important part of that,”

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**Nutrition Week**

Nutrition Week (ISSN: 1937-7657 [online]) is published biweekly, except for July 4, the first week in September, and the first and last weeks in December (24 times per year), by HCPro, Inc.

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**Briefly noted**

The CDC updates numbers on recent *Salmonella Typhimurium* outbreak.

Visit [http://tinyurl.com/8xcwfyw](http://tinyurl.com/8xcwfyw) to view the latest news from the CDC.

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**Diabetes coalition urges broader screening**

A coalition of 18 diabetes-related organizations suggests that America cannot stop the growing wave of type 2 diabetes—and its complications and costs—unless the recommendations for screening are broad enough to identify patients who are at risk for the disease.

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A study from the University of Copenhagen suggests that giving overweight patients a gut hormone that suppresses appetite leads to clinically beneficial weight loss as well as reduced blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) is a hormone that is secreted from the intestine when we eat. GLP-1-based therapy was recently introduced as a new treatment for patients with type 2 diabetes because of its ability to regulate blood sugar levels, according to a January 10 release on the study. But it also suppresses food intake and appetite, making it an interesting approach in the treatment of obesity.

Researchers at the University of Copenhagen analyzed the results of 25 randomized controlled trials involving over 6,000 patients. They found that patients who received clinically relevant doses of GLP-1R agonists for at least 20 weeks achieved a greater weight loss compared with the control groups. The benefit was seen for patients with and without type 2 diabetes, but it may be more pronounced in patients without diabetes.

“Because trans fat is a potent cause of heart disease, the federal government and the American Heart Association have urged consumers to avoid foods that contain it. After the FDA required trans fat to be listed on food labels, most large manufacturers removed partially hydrogenated oil, the source of artificial trans fat, from their products,” CSPI wrote in a release.

Visit http://tinyurl.com/7bc38m5 to view the release.

The FTC announced on January 9 that an operation that marketed acai berry supplements, “colon cleansers,” and other products using allegedly fraudulent free trial offers and phony endorsements from celebrities Oprah Winfrey and Rachael Ray will pay $1.5 million as part of a settlement. The money, the FTC said, will be made available for consumer refunds.

The agency said the case against Phoenix-based Central Coast Nutraceuticals, Inc., resulted in a settlement order that bans the defendants from so-called “negative-option” sales, such as continuity plans and free or introductory price trial offers, in which consumers pay nothing up front or only a small fee to receive a product, but are then automatically charged a higher price unless they take steps to cancel the shipments or return the product before the end of the trial period.

The FTC complaint, which goes back to 2010, charges that two people and five related companies deceptively claimed that their Acai Pure supplement would cause rapid and substantial weight loss, and that their Colotox colon cleanser would prevent colon cancer.

The FTC added that despite claiming to offer a “free” trial for a nominal fee and full refunds upon request, the defendants allegedly repeatedly made unauthorized charges to consumers’ bank accounts, and made it all but impossible to avoid paying full price for the products, typically $39.95–$59.95.

The settlement order requires defendant Graham G. Gibson to pay the FTC the balance of his investment account; transfer to the FTC $500,000 after mortgaging his home in Phoenix or transfer the property to a court-appointed liquidator if he cannot obtain the mortgage; and divest himself of his interest in a Hawaii vacation property.

Under the settlement order, the defendants are required to monitor the activities of any affiliate marketers selling products or services on their behalf, including reviewing any marketing materials used to ensure that they comply with the order.

Visit http://tinyurl.com/7ucxsda to view the FTC release.
Between 2003 and 2009, New York City put into place a number of strategies to deal with childhood obesity, and, according to a new CDC report, they appear to have had some success.

The measures included establishment of regulations to require improved nutrition, increased physical activity time and limited screen time in group child care, provision of extensive nutrition education training and physical activity equipment to 80% of group child care centers, and provision of on-site nutrition education workers at 300 centers. According to the report, school nurses were trained to identify and monitor children at high risk for obesity and to know when to notify parents that a problem exists and when to refer children for additional medical care.

The findings in this report indicate that from 2006–2007 to 2010–2011, the prevalence of obesity among New York City public elementary and middle school students decreased overall and across all demographic groups. Decreases in obesity prevalence were most notable among children aged 5–6 years and were greater among white and Asian/Pacific Islander children than among Hispanic and black children.

Visit http://tinyurl.com/bmlgyub to view the report.