

# Temptation at Checkout:

## The Food Industry's Sneaky Strategy for Selling More

---

JESSICA ALMY, J.D., M.S.  
SENIOR NUTRITION POLICY COUNSEL  
AUGUST 4, 2015





Walmart Checkout  
Photo Credit: La Crosse County Health Department

Funding Support Generously Provided by Voices for  
Healthy Kids and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation

# Today's Webinar

- Set the Audio tab on the GoToWebinar control panel to the method you are using: Speakers (on computer) or Telephone.
- Your line is muted. To ask questions, use the chat box on the GoToWebinar control panel.

## 1. Introduction

- 30 Seconds About the Center for Science in the Public Interest
- Why Think About Checkout?

## 2. Getting Products into Checkout Is a Powerful Marketing Strategy

## 3. People Are Vulnerable by the Time They Get to Checkout

## 4. Changing How Choices Are Offered Can Encourage Positive Outcomes

## 5. Healthy Checkout Can Support Health—Case Studies

## 6. Where Do We Go from Here?



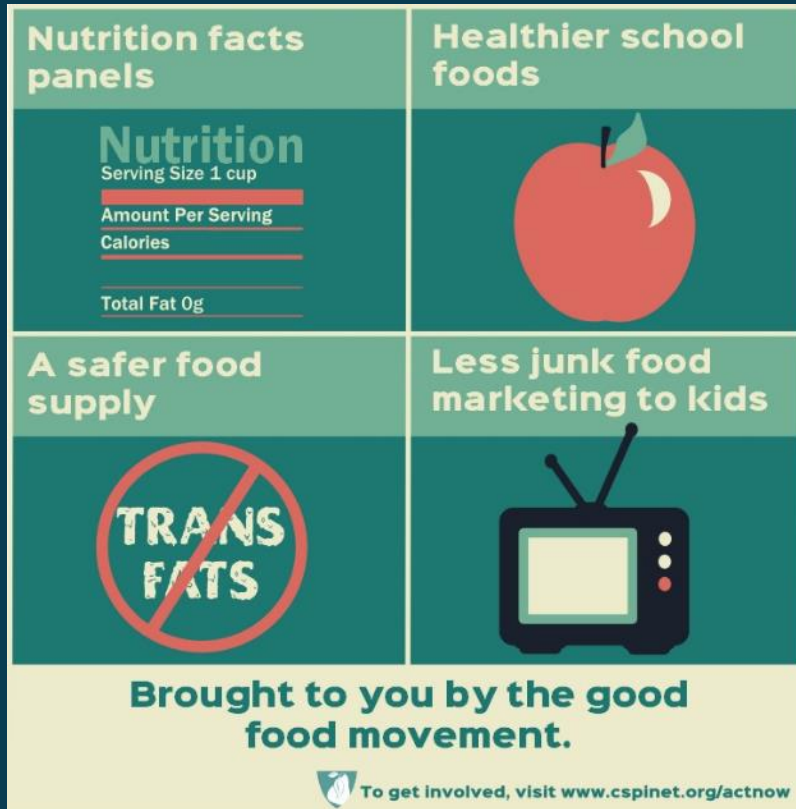
# Center for Science in the Public Interest

---



- Since 1971, CSPI has worked to:
  - Make it easier to eat healthfully
  - Prevent/mitigate diet and obesity related diseases
- Educate the public
  - Nutrition Action Healthletter
  - Press
  - Books
  - Reports
- National, state and local policy

# Key Nutrition Policy Issues at CSPI



1. School Foods
  - School Lunch and Breakfast Programs
  - Competitive Foods
2. Menu Labeling
3. Healthy Public Property
4. Food Marketing to Kids
  - TV, On-Package, and In-School
  - Restaurant Children's Meals
5. Healthy Checkout

# Why Think About Checkout?

(Or, Why “It’s Just an Occasional Candy Bar” Is Not a Valid Argument)



- Food is everywhere
- Marketing-induced hunger

People make different choices depending on what is available







The causes of obesity are complex; the American obesity epidemic is estimated to be due to an excess of +/- 100 calories per day for adults and 64 calories for children.

Leading Contributors to Premature Death (2010)		
Diet	678,000	←
Tobacco	465,000	
High blood pressure	442,700	←
High body-mass index	364,000	←
Physical inactivity	234,000	
High total cholesterol	158,400	←
Alcohol and drug use	111,000	
Air pollution	110,000	
Sexual abuse and violence	9,300	
Occupational carcinogens (e.g., asbestos)	5,900	

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a **1% reduction in dietary health risks such as weight, blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol risk factors would save \$83 to \$103 per person per year** in medical costs.

Sources:

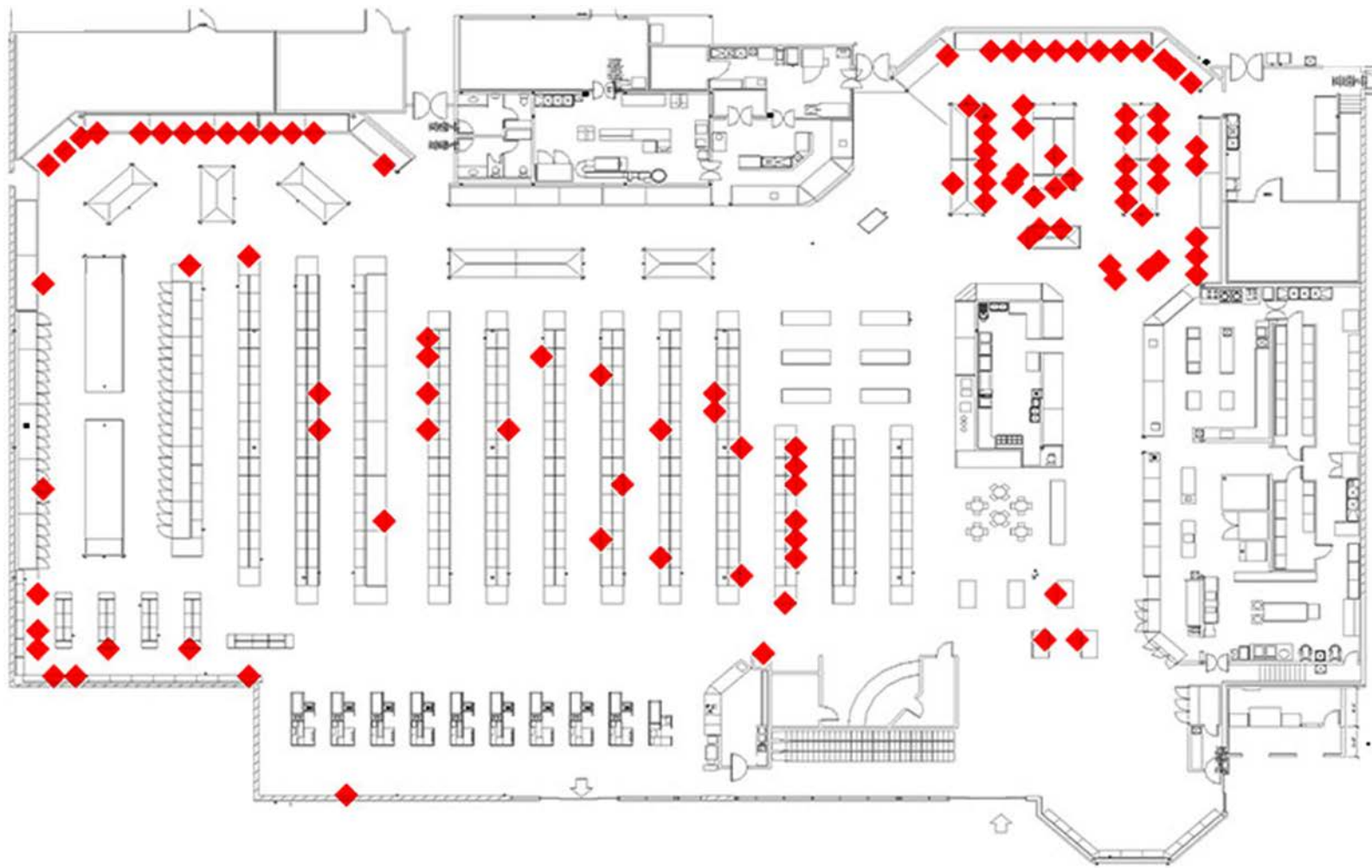
U.S Burden of Disease Collaborators (Murray CJL et al.) (2010);

[http://www.cdc.gov/policy/resources/Investingin\\_ReducesEmployerCosts.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/policy/resources/Investingin_ReducesEmployerCosts.pdf)



People who snack between meals do not always offset consumption by eating fewer calories at meals.






Used with approval from  
[shopperscientist.com](http://shopperscientist.com)


# There Is No Neutral



Forces outside of our control shape our food decisions, sometimes without us knowing.

A decorative horizontal bar at the bottom of the slide, consisting of a thin orange line on top of a thicker dark teal bar.

Food and beverage  
companies shape our  
decisions, sometimes  
without our knowing.





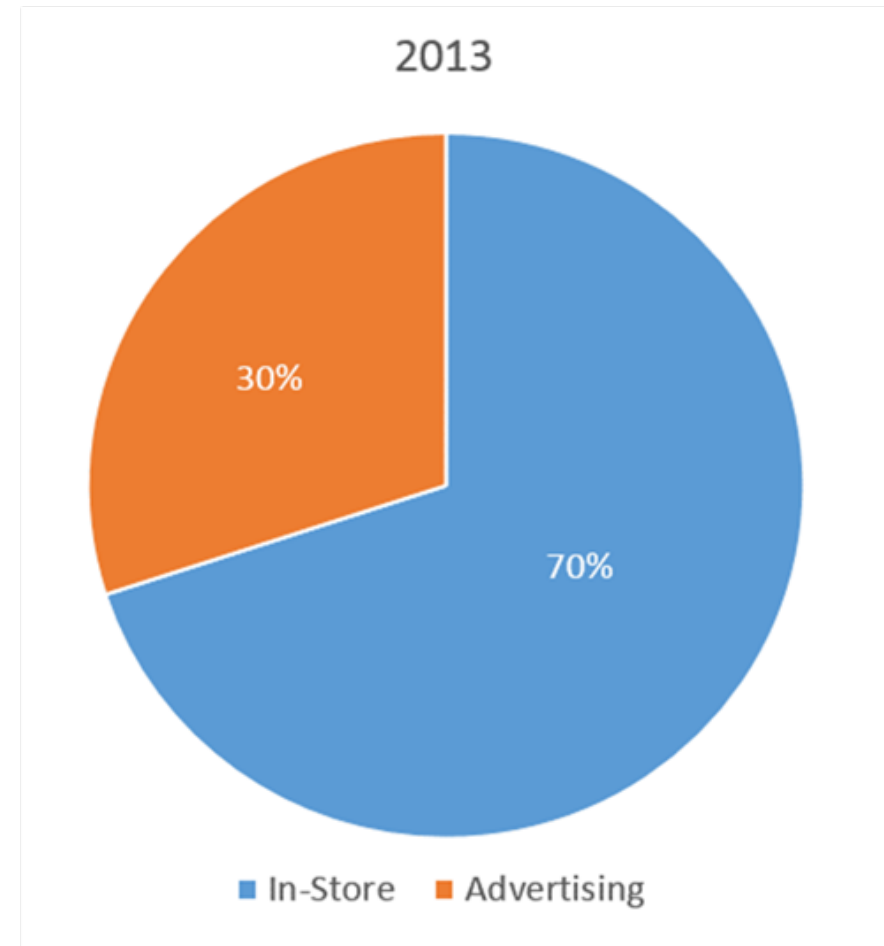
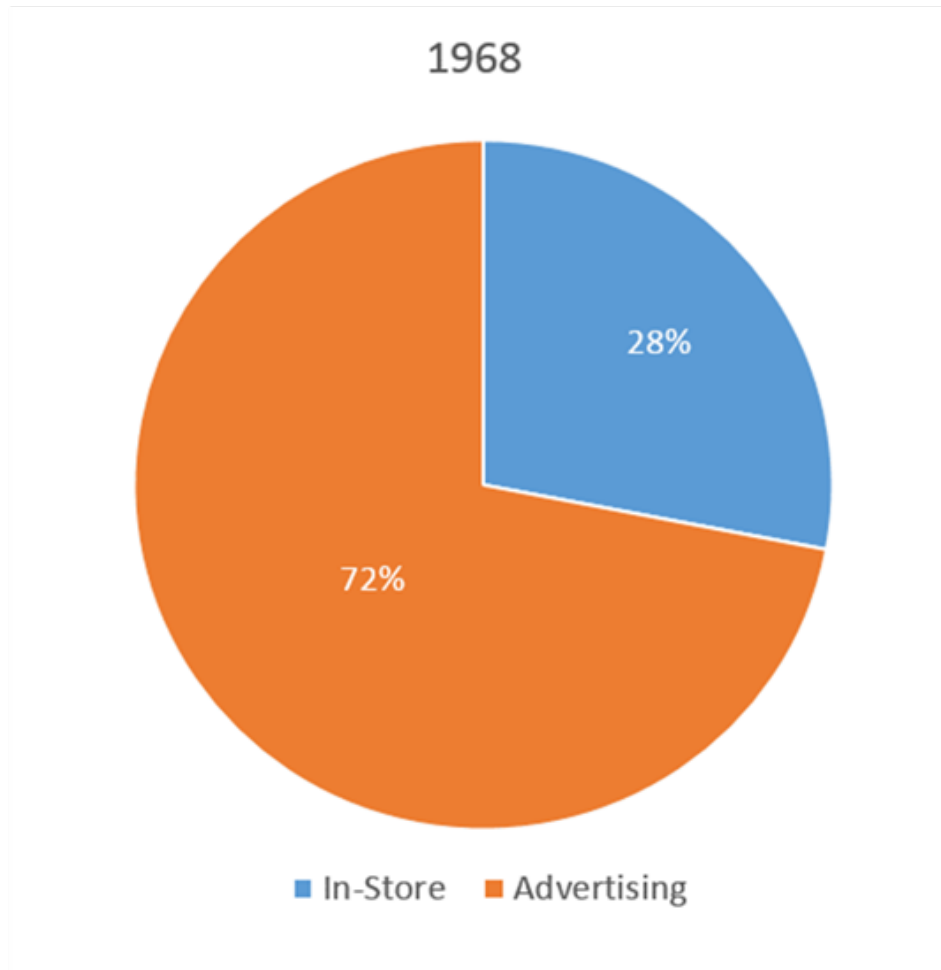


Corporate Interests, Corporate Gain

# Getting Products into Checkout Is a Powerful Marketing Strategy







# Food Marketing Budgets

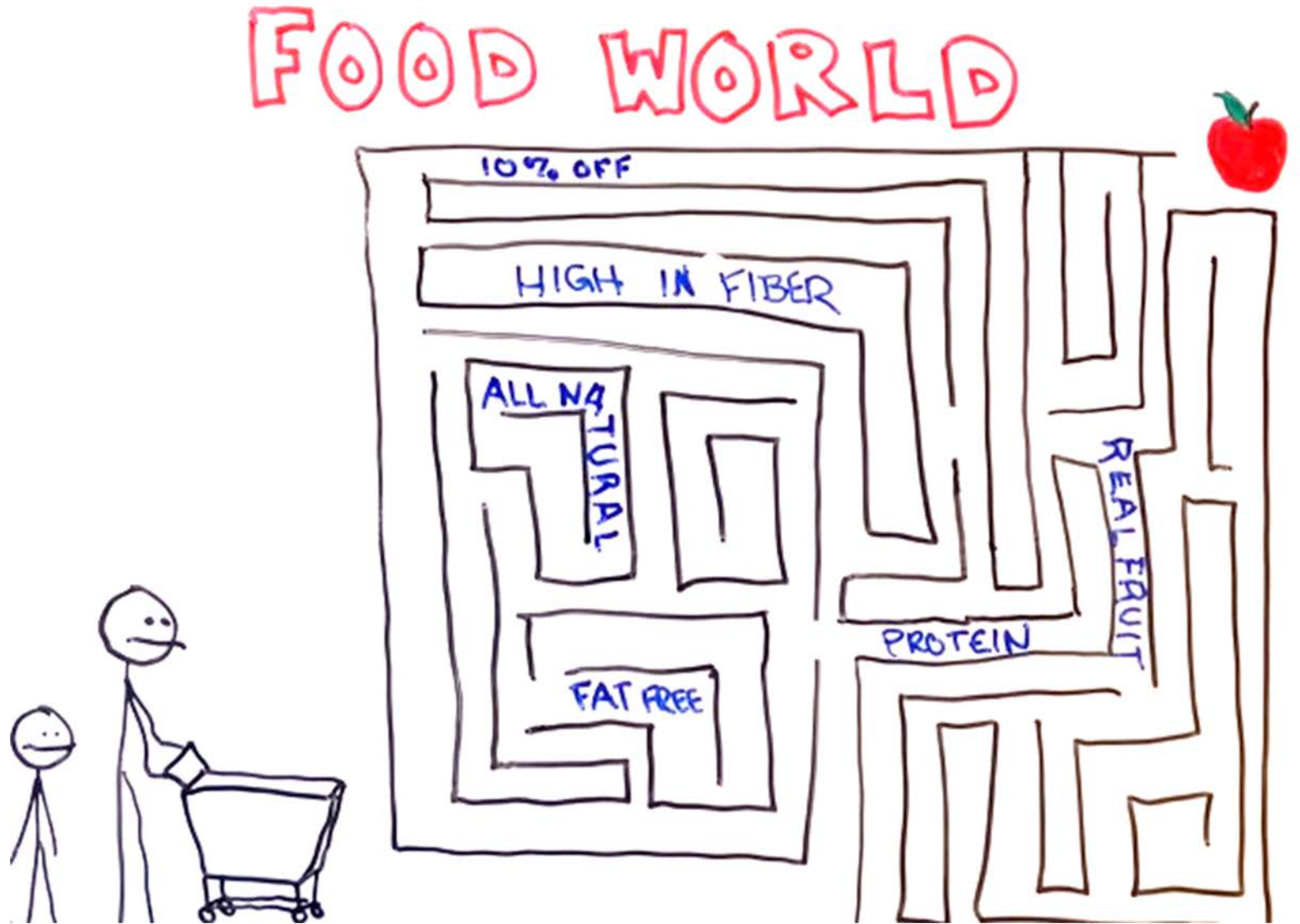
Source: American Antitrust Institute (2013)

- Placement at checkout increases the likelihood of purchase.
- Sales of food items respond to how much shelf space they are allotted.



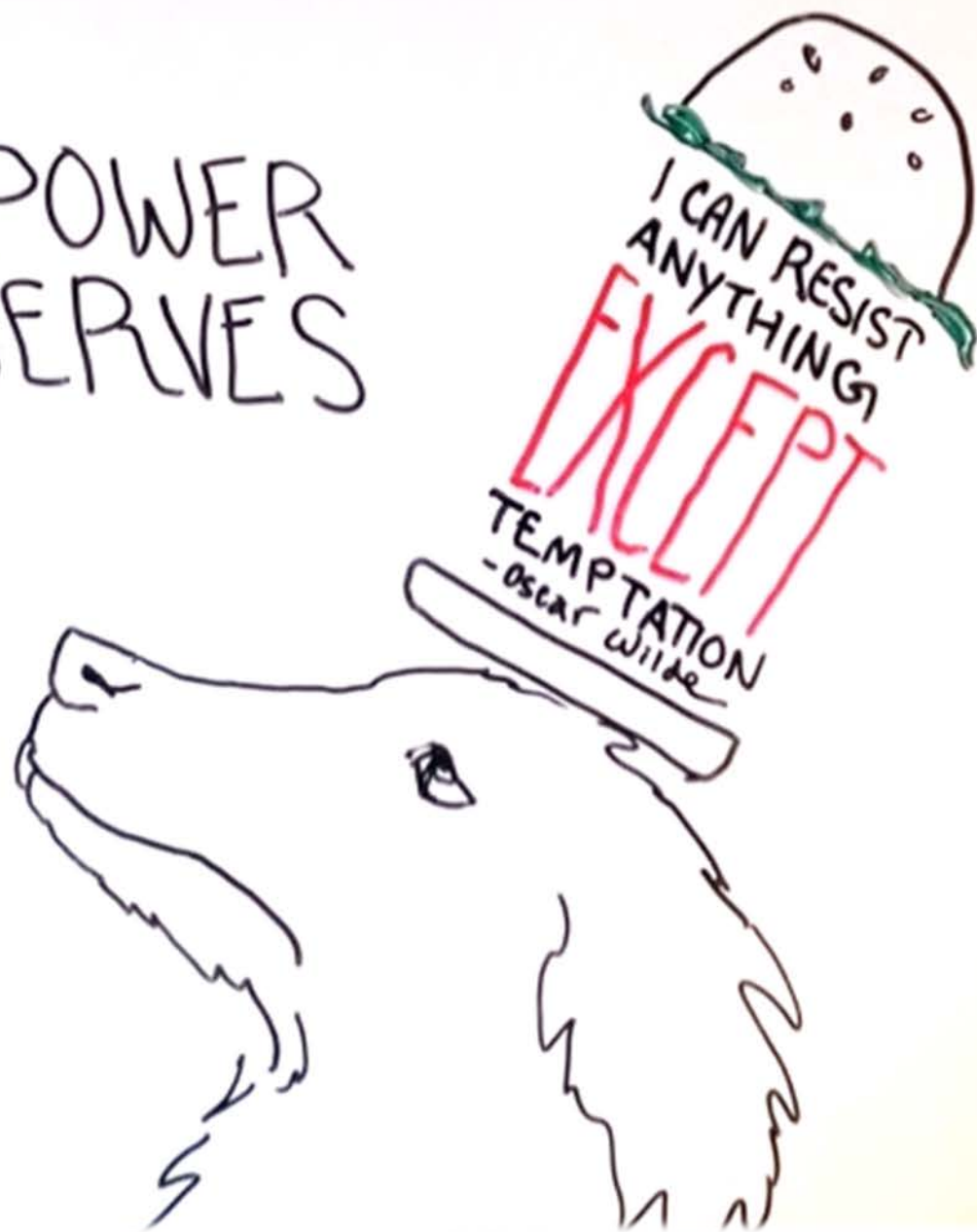
# People Are Vulnerable by the Time They Get to Checkout

- In-store marketing affects consumer purchases
- Customers experience decision fatigue





WILLPOWER  
RESERVES



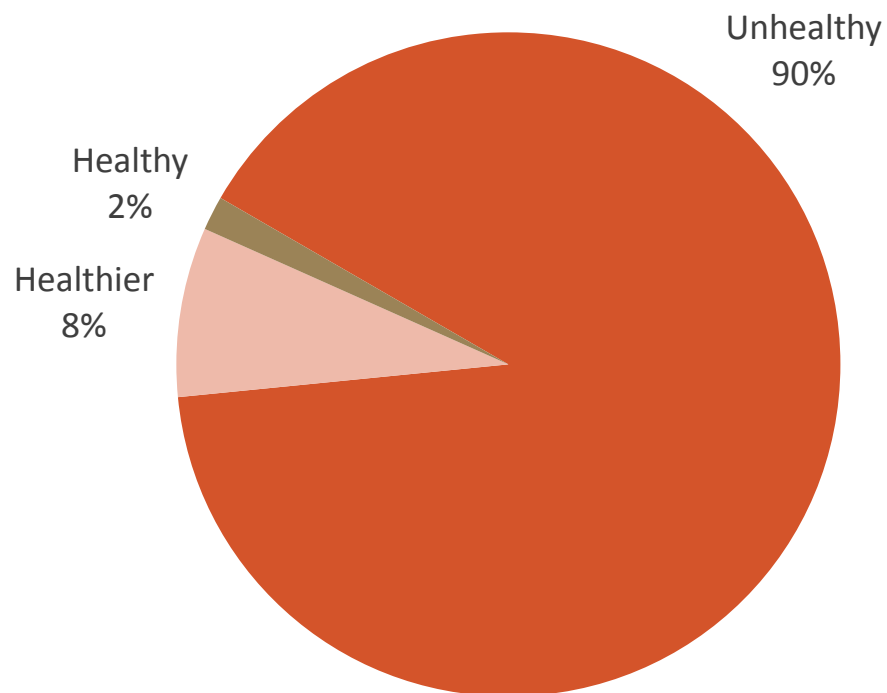
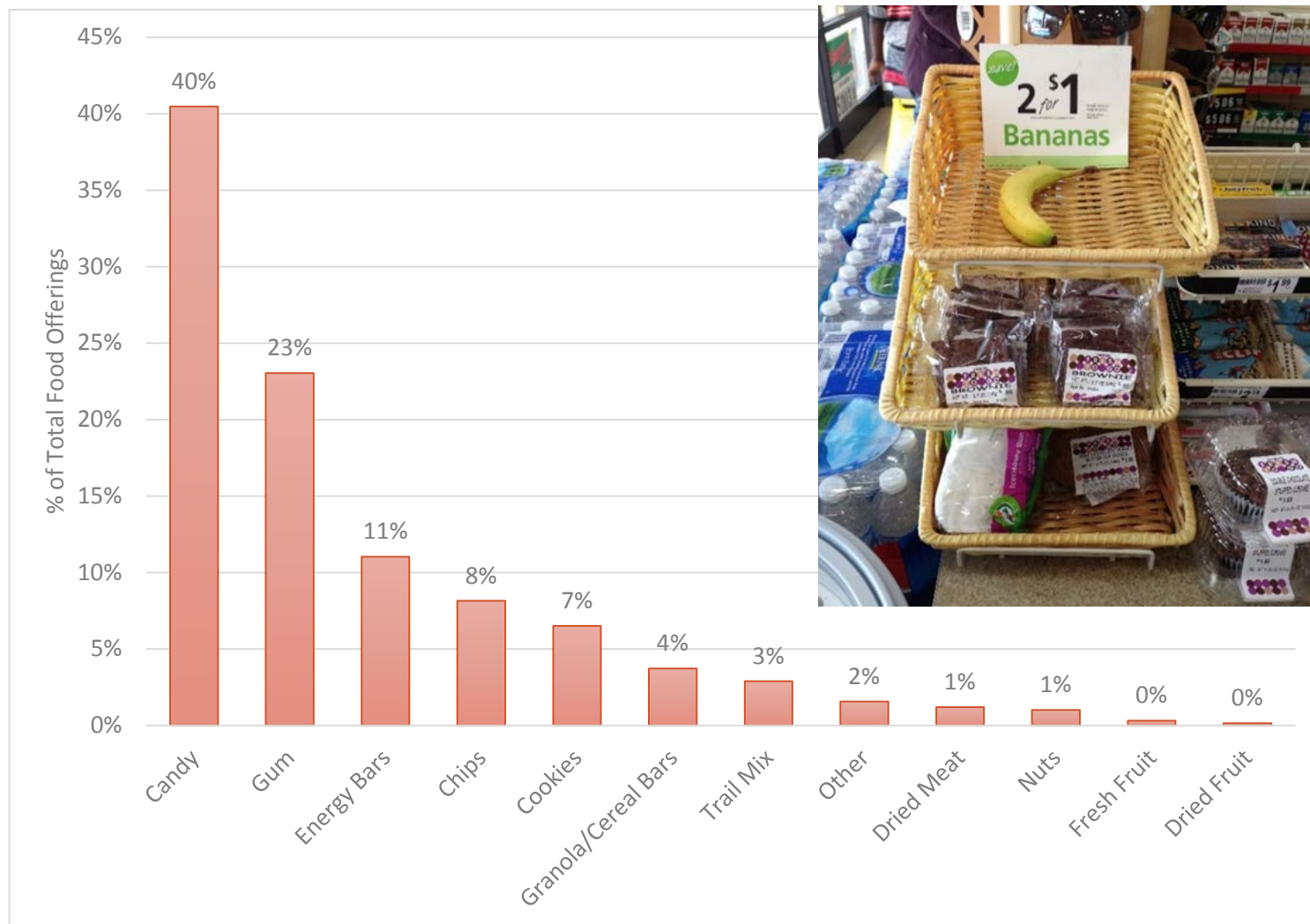
# The Problem with Checkout

- Americans shop for food 1.7 times per week
- Wait 3.5 - 5 minutes
- Can't avoid checkout
- Placement induces additional purchases and impulse buys

	<u>Checkouts</u>	<u>Space</u>
Candy	83%	185 feet
Carbonated Beverages	51%	27 feet
Salty Snacks	50%	27 feet
Water	50%	15 feet

Source: Masterfoods (2010)

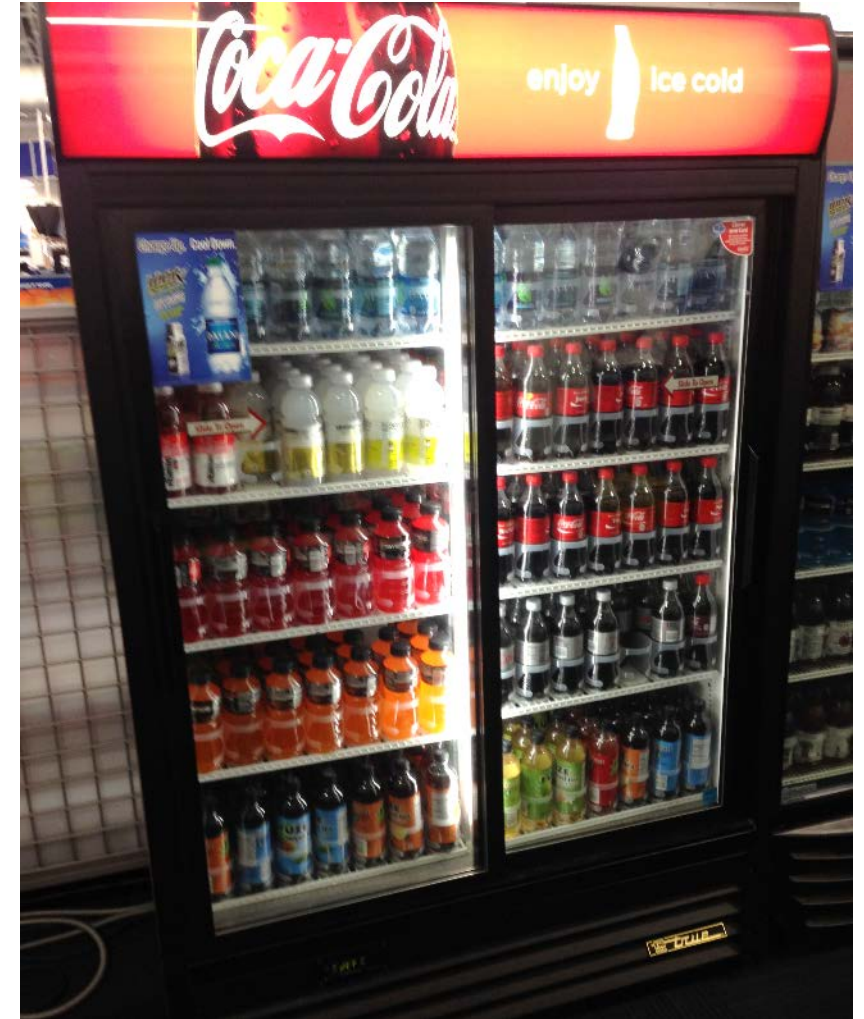
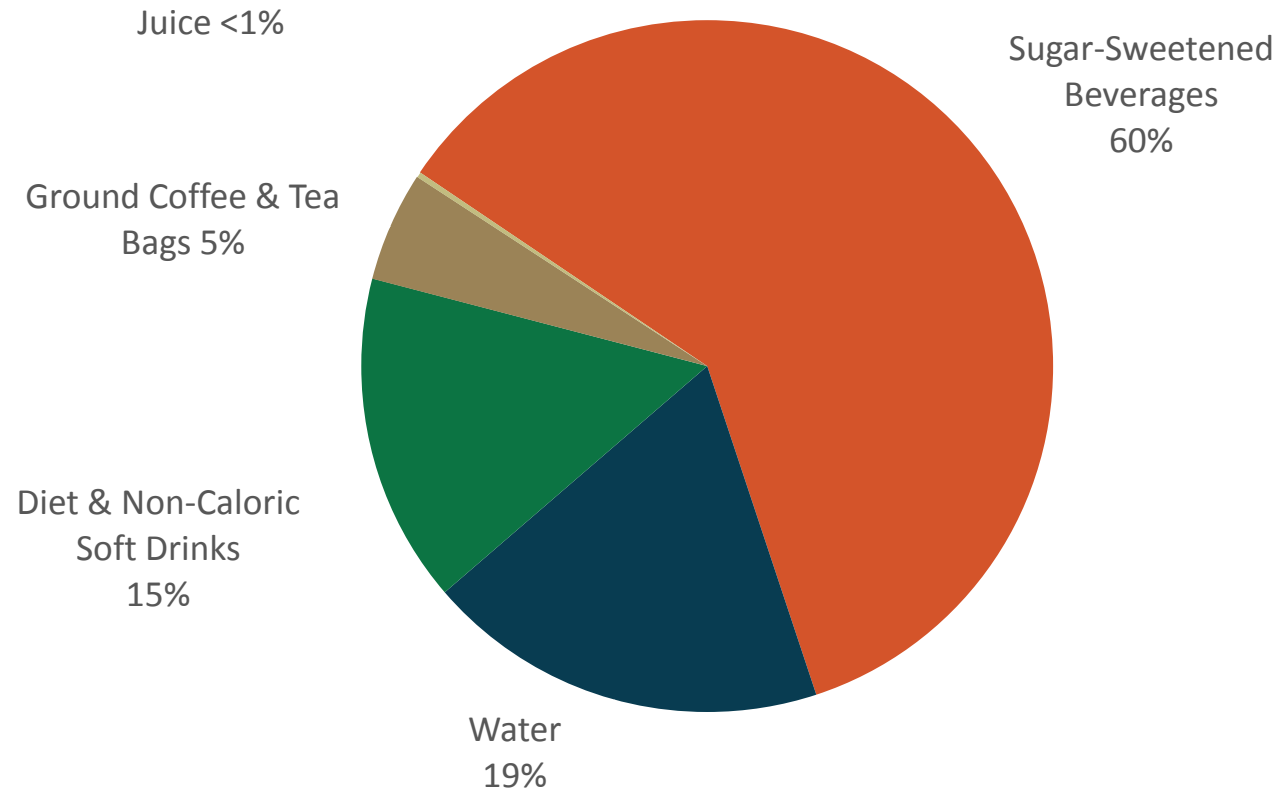
# Food Offerings at Checkout Are Unhealthy



Source: CSPI (2014), available at [cspinet.org/healthycheckout](http://cspinet.org/healthycheckout)



# Beverage Offerings at Checkout Are Unhealthy Too

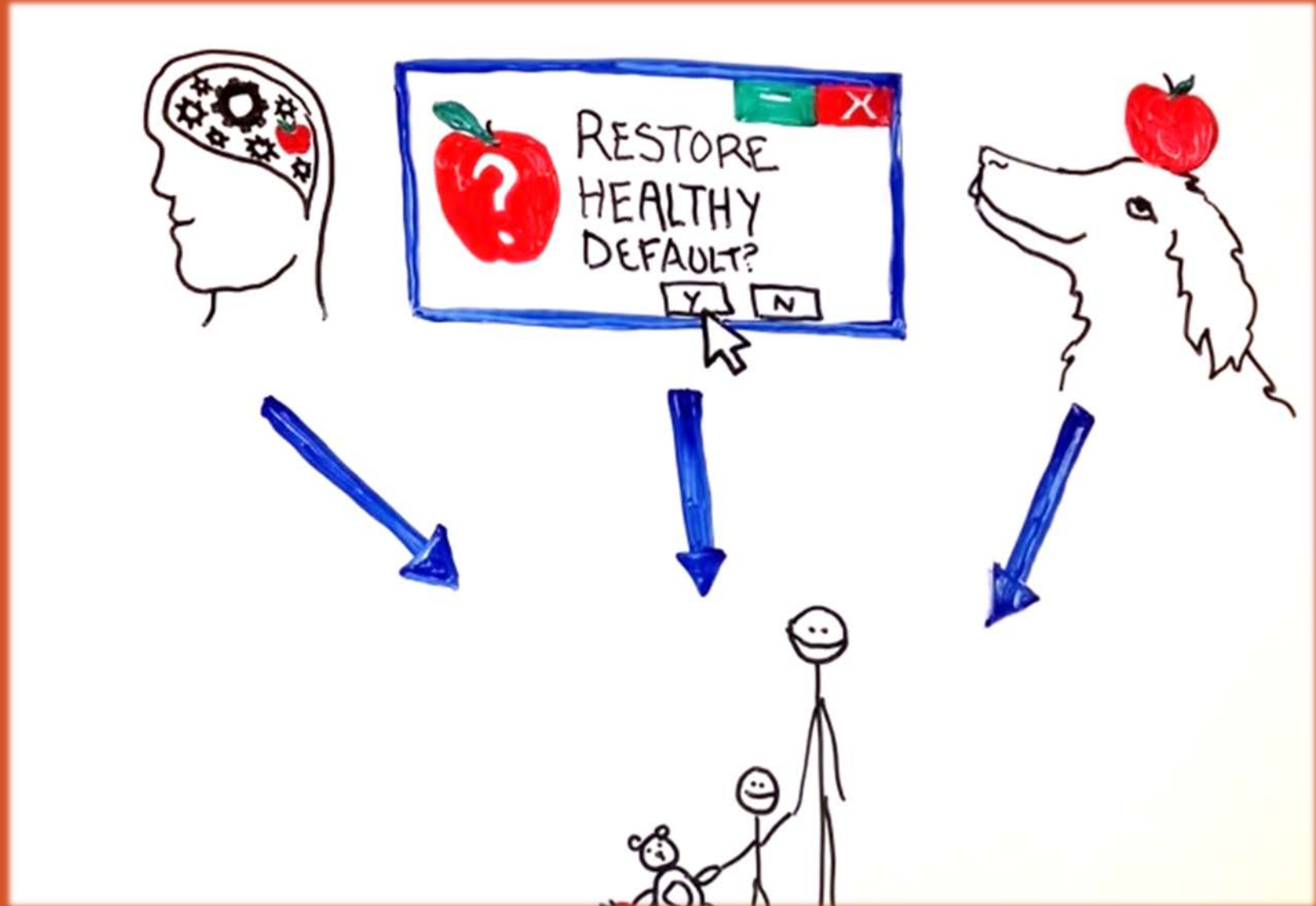


# Creating Unhealthy Norms for Kids

- Shared responsibility
- In-store marketing can induce conflict
  - *Parents usually resist*
- Checkout normalizes candy and soda as snacks

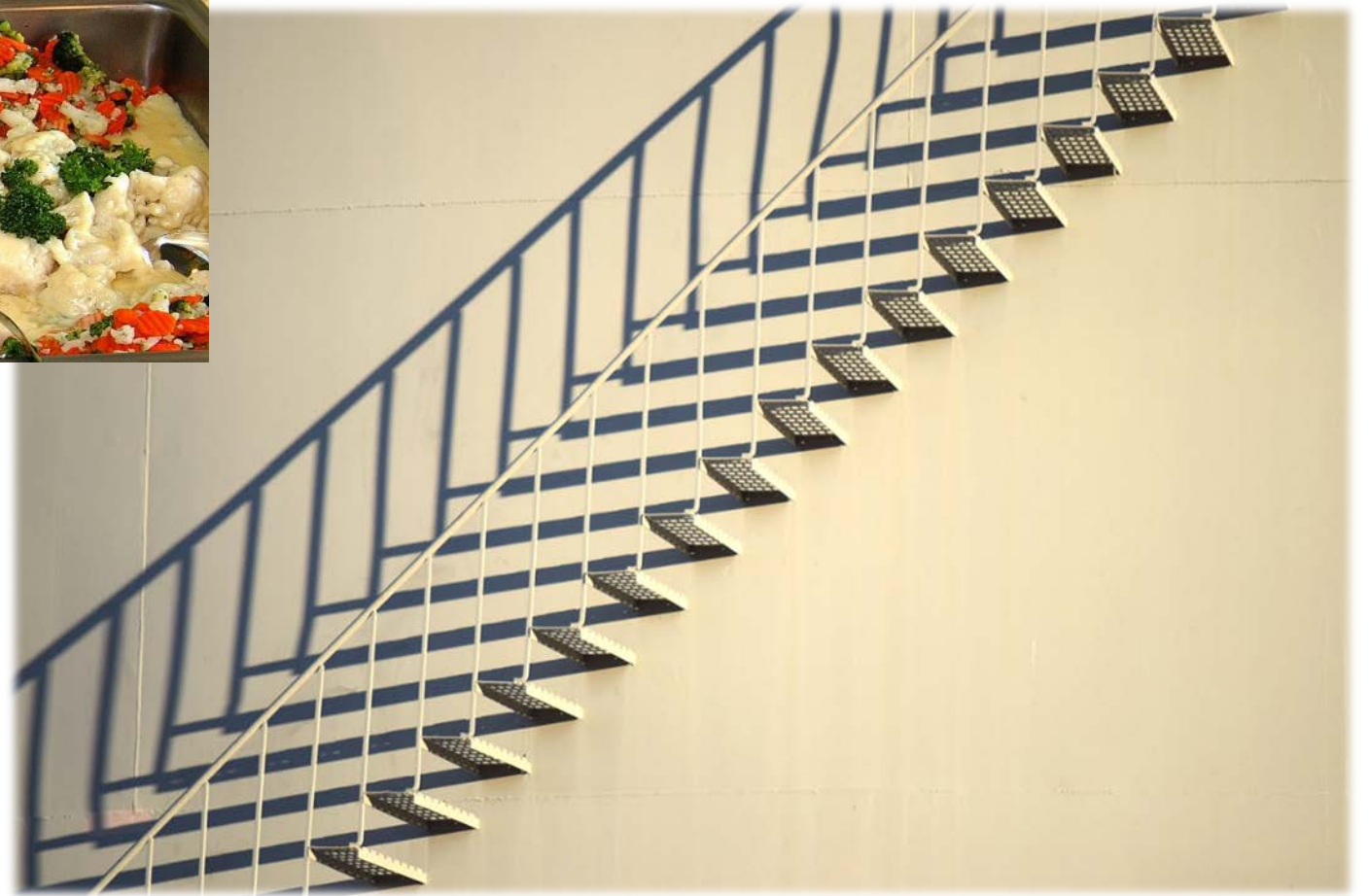


Changing How  
Choices Are  
Offered Can  
Encourage Positive  
Outcomes





# Nudges that Promote Public Health



# Example: Google's Snacks





# Checkout: Opportunity to Expand Non-Food Merchandise Offerings



In CSPI's checkout study, **47% of checkout offerings were non-food merchandise.**



# Healthy Checkout Can Support Health

## Case Studies



# Healthy Checkout Pilots Across the U.S.



# Healthy Checkout Across the Pond



**TESCO**





# Where Do We Go From Here?

The Time Has Come  
to Challenge  
Business As Usual







## Recommendations for Advocates & Consumers

Contact retailers to ask that they remove food or offer healthy options at checkout.  
Ask soda, candy, and snack manufacturers only to sell healthier options at checkout.  
Urge your elected officials to support checkout policies.

# Additional Recommendations

## **RETAILERS**

- Non-food stores should stop selling foods and beverages at checkout.
- Food stores should adopt nutrition standards for their checkout offerings.

## **FOOD AND BEVERAGE COMPANIES**

- Manufacturers should agree not to pay to put candy, soda, etc. at checkout.
- Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative should add checkout to pledges.

## **GOVERNMENT AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

- Agencies, hospitals, and workplaces should implement policies to improve checkout on their properties (as part of procurement policies).
- Health departments should urge retailers and manufacturers to adopt voluntary checkout policies.



# CSPI Has Resources and Can Provide Campaign Support

## Corporate Campaigns or Public Policy Campaigns

- Report: “Temptation at Checkout: The Food Industry’s Sneaky Strategy for Selling More”
- Model Nutrition Standards
- Whiteboard Lecture on Supermarket Marketing Techniques
- *Coming Soon*: Model Checkout Policy (ChangeLab Solutions)

[cspinet.org/healthycheckout](https://cspinet.org/healthycheckout)

# Act Now

Ask Bed Bath and  
Beyond to Get Rid of  
Candy at Checkout

[cspinet.org/actnow](http://cspinet.org/actnow)





# Contact:

Jessica Almy  
[jalmy@cspinet.org](mailto:jalmy@cspinet.org)

Center for Science in  
the Public Interest  
[cspinet.org](http://cspinet.org)  
[@CSPI](https://facebook.com/cspinet)

