Food Phobia
Marketing Issues in Weight Loss, Dietary Supplements and Food
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Obesity Epidemic
• One in six Americans is overweight
• Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death
• Incidence of overweight youth tripled over past 25-30 years

Weight Loss Industry
• 70 million Americans trying to lose weight
• $35 billion spent in 2000 on weight loss products
• Fraudulent weight loss products # 1 fraud in FTC survey

FTC Study
September 2002
• Number of weight loss ads doubled from 1991 – 2002
• Type of weight loss products advertised shifted from meal replacements to dietary supplement
• 40% of claims almost certainly false; 55% very likely false or unsubstantiated

Testimonials
• “I lost 120 pounds in 7 weeks without diet or exercise!”
• Claim may be false, exaggerated, or atypical
• “Results not typical” disclaimers are not effective

Before and After
• 42% of weight loss ads use this technique
• Creative photography
• Different models?
• Did they actually use the product?
Muscle Hustle

- “no sweat” claims likely to be false
- “pulsating” belt is no substitute for actual exercise
- Claims of lost inches or fat may be qualified by need to diet

Regulation of Weight Loss Claims

- FTC cases in weight loss area have increased sharply since 1990
- FDA regulates OTC drugs, but since 1994, nutritional supplements get different treatment under DSHEA

Dietary Supplements for Weight Loss

- Ephedra or Ma Huang is supplement formerly used for weight loss products
- FDA took it off market in April 2004 due to adverse health effects
- Is “hoodia” the new problem ingredient?

FTC as National Nanny

- 1978 “Kid Vid” proposal would have banned ads on children’s TV
- Congress stepped in to halt
- 2008 – FTC report on Marketing Food to Children
Sodium in Restaurant Food

- Center for Science in the Public Interest sued Denny's for failing to disclose sodium content of entrees
- A full meal at Denny's can contain as much as 6,700 mg of sodium, RDA is 1500

Nutrition Labels for Restaurant Food?

- Americans spend 46% of food dollars on restaurant food
- Not covered by Nutrition Labeling & Education Act
- Info could help consumers make health choices

Consumer Activism: Education

- Be educated about deceptive weight loss claims
- Use nutrition information available on packaging and from other sources like Healthier Wyoming program
- Make healthy food choices based on fact not ignorance

Consumer Activism: Press for More Information about Food

- Localities now are passing laws requiring calorie disclosures for restaurant foods
- Federal/state and local government could do more to promote informed marketplace choices?

THANK YOU

ANY QUESTIONS?