

# Eat chocolate to get a free volleyball?

Felicity Lawrence

5 The chocolate manufacturer Cadbury is launching a £9m campaign to persuade children to buy 160m chocolate bars in exchange for "free" sports equipment for schools. It says the initiative will help to tackle obesity.

10 The marketing scheme, Cadbury Get Active, is being promoted with the Youth Sport Trust through schools. It has been endorsed by the minister for sport, Richard Caborn. It also uses sports stars Paula Radcliffe and Audley Harrison to link the brand with healthy activity.

15 To earn the equipment, school-children will have to collect tokens from the main brands of Cadbury chocolate. A set of posts and a net for volleyball for secondary school-children would require, for example, 20 tokens from 5,440 chocolate bars.

25 Consumer watchdogs and health organisations are furious at the scheme. The Food Commission points out that a school will need to encourage children to spend more than £2,000 on chocolate and consume nearly 1.25m calories to win the volleyball posts and net. A 10-year-old eating enough chocolate to earn a 30 basketball through the scheme would need to play basketball for 90 hours to burn off the calories consumed. A junior basketball team would have to play 27 full-length games to burn 35 off the calories.

40 The chairman of the Government's obesity taskforce, Professor Phil James, said: "This is a classic example of how the food and soft drinks industry are failing to take on board that they are major contributors to obesity problems throughout the world.

45 "They always try to divert attention to physical activity. Independent analysts have found that Cadbury Schweppes has one of the worst portfolios for products in terms of children's wellbeing."

50 A spokesman for the Department of Sport said it did not believe the scheme would encourage children to buy more chocolate.

55 Cadbury defended the campaign, saying it expected "the wider community to club together to use their wrappers from the chocolate they are already eating".

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