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LIFESTYLES

TOYS: THE CREAM OF THE CROP

OTTAWA (CP) — An activity centre created by Fisher-Price to keep little folks alert and busy was among a list of top 10 toys announced Tuesday by the Canadian Toy Testing Council.

"These toys are the creme de la creme," said Nicole Turpin, a council spokeswoman.

"They are ingenious and should be honored for the quality of play that we saw from our testers."

The council, which is supported by the federal government, has already released its annual report listing and grading about 1,500 toys.

The top 10:

- Activity Table, featuring little gadgets such as dials, a mirror and a shape sorter, by Fisher-Price; ages nine to 24 months; $50-$55.
- Baby Doll, a soft cuddly doll to change and feed, by Playskool; ages 12-36 months; $50-$20.
- The Burds, colorful hand puppets with expressive facial features, by Toi; ages four-12; $30-$35.
- Capsela 1000, a set of plastic parts for building special models that demonstrate scientific functions, by Capsela; ages seven and up; $125-$130.
- Chimalong Jr.,musical instrument including coded song book, by Woodstock Chimes; ages four and up; $45-$50.
- Sound Safaru Adventure Game, gameboard with sound buttons to match with jungle animals, by Western Publishing; ages four and up; $25-$30.
- Space Shuttle, space vehicle with components and toy astronauts, by Tomy; ages three to five; $35-$40.
- Take Off, geography game by Sorowood Industries; ages six and up; $50-$60.
- Telepaths, a guessing game by Brainstorm Games Inc.; ages nine and up; $30-$35.
- Vivelle, an art kit by Galt; ages eight and up; $20-$25.

Study links junk food ads to health woes in children

by DANIEL HANEY

ATLANTA (AP) — Violence-packed cartoons aren't the only potential hazard of too much Saturday morning TV. A study has found a sharp increase recently in ads for high-fat foods aimed at youngsters.

Criticism of children's television usually focuses on the mayhem in the programs. However, earlier research has shown that the more TV youngsters watch, the fatter they are and the higher their blood cholesterol levels.

The latest study, released this week, shows that the advertising for fast-food chains and packaged meals, such as canned spaghetti, has suddenly doubled after remaining constant at about 20 per cent of commercials for two decades.

An even bigger proportion of these ads than ever before are filled with images of fatty fried chicken, hamburgers and pizza.

"You can get a healthy meal at a fast food restaurant. But a child watching television doesn't get to see those," said Lisa Cohn, a nutritionist who conducted the study with Dr. Thomas Starc at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Centre in New York.

Cohn and Starc set out to see what happened on television after the National Cholesterol Education Program drew up new dietary guidelines for children and teenagers in 1991.

The eating rules suggest youngsters cut their daily intake of fat to less than 30 per cent of total calories. Saturated fat should make up no more than 10 per cent of calories.

The researchers compared Saturday morning broadcasts from 1989 and 1990 to those in 1993. They presented their findings at the annual scientific meeting of the American Heart Association.

They found that a youngster who watches five hours of TV on Saturday morning sees 65 food commercials, or about one every five minutes.

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