

Obesity Reaches Global Crisis Point...

By Dr. Joseph Mercola, drmercola.com April 20, 2016

In 2014, the obesity rate among American adults hit 38 percent — a 3 percent increase from 2012.¹ In 2004, about 32 percent of adults fell in the obese category. While many still consider obesity primarily a cosmetic issue, the health ramifications of obesity are significant. The fact that 1 in 5 U.S. deaths is now related to obesity really drives home that point. Researchers looking at obesity rates around the world note that for the first time in history obese people now outnumber those who are underweight. Obesity rates have dramatically increased around the globe over the past four decades, and according to this study:^{2,3,4,5}

641 million people were obese in 2014, compared to 105 million in 1975. A total of 55 million are now morbidly obese

In that time frame, obesity tripled among men and doubled among women, while the number of people who are underweight slightly decreased, from about 14 percent in 1975 to about 9 percent in 2014

By 2025, an estimated 20 percent of the global adult population, 40 percent of British and nearly 45 percent of American adults will be obese

Obesity Countermeasures Have Failed Worldwide...

At present, the global average body mass index (BMI) is just over 24. A BMI of 25 to 29 is considered overweight, while a BMI of 30 to 39 is considered obese, and anything over 40 is morbidly obese. According to British study author Majid Ezzati: "Over the past 40 years, we have changed from a world in which underweight prevalence was more than double that of obesity, to one in which more people are obese than underweight." The study concludes that, so far, government policies and interventions have failed to curb obesity rates in most countries, and "to avoid an epidemic of severe obesity, the next step must be to implement these policies, and to systematically assess their effect."

Interventions Needed to Address Both Obesity and Malnourishment...

As noted in the study, drugs and bariatric surgeries are not enough to address the health risks associated with the high BMI levels currently seen across the globe. Moreover, public health officials face the challenge of developing strategies that address not only obesity, but malnourishment as well. While rates of starvation have declined, underweight is still a significant problem in poverty stricken areas, especially South Asia and certain South African nations. It's also quite possible to be obese yet be malnourished, courtesy of a processed food diet high in sugar but lacking in essential nutrients. To make a real difference, the researchers note we need a coordinated global effort to address food prices — making healthy foods more affordable, and perhaps adding extra taxes on highly processed foods.

This, I believe, is indeed where the problem lies. There's no doubt in my mind that current obesity rates are an artifact of eating a processed food diet that is too high in carbs and poor quality protein, and too low in healthy fat. A high-fat, low net carb diet is really the key that can turn this trend around. It's important to realize that you don't get fat from eating fat; you get fat from not effectively burning fat, and that's the metabolic result of a high sugar diet. It very effectively impairs your body's ability to burn fat for fuel.

Global Diabetes Rates Also on the Rise...

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With obesity being a major risk factor for insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes, it's no surprise that diabetes rates are skyrocketing as well. As noted to BBC News by Dr. Etienne Krug, the World Health Organization (WHO) official in charge of leading efforts against diabetes,⁶ "the world is facing an 'unrelenting march' of diabetes which now affects nearly 1 in 11 adults" worldwide. According to statistics from the (WHO), diabetes rates quadrupled between 1980 and 2014, from 108 million to 422 million. In turn, diabetes and higher than optimal glucose levels are linked to 3.7 million deaths worldwide each year. As with obesity, WHO officials warn that diabetes rates will continue to climb unless "drastic action" is taken. Four decades ago, affluent nations had the highest rates of diabetes. Today, low- and middle income countries have the highest rates. This isn't so surprising when you consider the spread of processed foods into these nations. The greatest increase has occurred in the Middle East, where diabetes rates have soared from just under 6 percent (6 million people) in 1980 to nearly 14 percent (43 million people) in 2014. Turkey has also seen a dramatic increase, with diabetes rates rising from 7.6 percent in 2000, to 13.4 percent a decade later. What's worse, only 1 in 5 Turks even knows what diabetes is, or what the health implications are.

WHO Recommendations...

Sensibly, the increase in diabetes is being blamed on lack of exercise and the increasing prevalence of processed and fast food. Rising levels of stress are also implicated. To address rising diabetes rates, WHO is now calling on governments to:

- Regulate the fat and sugar content of foods to make healthier options more easily available
- Improve urban planning to allow for walking and bicycling
- Encourage breastfeeding

WHO is also urging the food industry to "act responsibly," and to reduce the unhealthy fat and sugar content, and stop junk food marketing aimed at children

Health Risks Associated With Obesity...

Being slim is not necessarily proof of being healthy. Metabolic dysfunction can strike anyone not following an optimized diet. However, carrying excess weight virtually guarantees you'll suffer health problems. This is why childhood obesity is such a grave concern, as obese children are likely to suffer the consequences much earlier in their adult life. Cancer is one major long-term hazard. Worldwide, obesity is responsible for half a million cancers each year. The insulin and leptin resistance that comes with obesity also results in chronic inflammation; a factor linked to a range of health problems. The full list of health problems associated with excess weight is very long. The following is just a sampling of some of the risks:

Hypertension, heart disease and stroke

Gallbladder disease

Cognitive decline, dementia, and Alzheimer's⁷

Kidney disease. Obese people are nearly seven times more likely to develop kidney problems compared to those of normal weight.⁸ Being overweight but not obese raises your risk of kidney disease by 3.5 times.

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). NAFLD has been identified in 38 percent of obese children and adolescents in the U.S.,⁹ which raises their risk of eventually needing a liver transplant, as it prevents the liver from working properly

Soda — A Major Culprit in the Obesity Epidemic...

Sodas and other sugary beverages (including fruit juices) are a major culprit driving the obesity trend and associated health problems. Unfortunately, the soda industry has been very effective in its efforts to deceive you about this fact. Compared to studies without financial conflicts of interest, research funded by the beverage and sugar industries are five times more likely to conclude there's "no link" between sugary beverages and weight gain. The industry has also spent large sums of money to convince you that soda can be enjoyed as part of a healthy lifestyle, provided you exercise enough. The problem is, while you certainly burn more calories when you exercise, you cannot burn off thousands of excess calories each day. For example, just to offset a one-soda-per-day habit, you have to walk one hour per day. According to a 2015 meta-review¹¹ published in the Mayo Clinic Proceedings, once you reach 18 percent of your daily calories from added sugar, there's a two-fold increase in metabolic harm that promotes pre-diabetes and diabetes. Moreover, research suggests sugary beverages alone are to blame for about 183,000 deaths worldwide each year, including 133,000 diabetes deaths, 44,000 heart disease deaths, and 6,000 cancer deaths.

As Westerners Wise Up to Sugar Dangers, Food Companies Shift Their Focus to Developing Nations...

On the bright side, consumers across the Western world have become increasingly aware of the connection between sugar and obesity, and soda sales have slowly but surely declined over the past decade.^{12,13,14} Unfortunately, taking a page out of the tobacco industry's playbook, Big Soda has simply shifted its focus to low-to middle income countries to offset declining sales in developed nations. This is undoubtedly why we're now seeing the most prevalent growth of obesity and diabetes rates shifting from high income countries to lower income nations. Coca-Cola is even receiving subsidies to facilitate its reach into Africa and Asia. In 2013, Mexico had the highest per capita consumption of soda in the world, with the average Mexican downing 135 liters of the sweet stuff each year. Between 1999 and 2006, calories from soda tripled in certain age groups, and childhood obesity and diabetes rates have seen a steady climb. According to a report by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, the No.1 cause of global disease is now related to behavioral factors such as diet and lack of exercise, and non-communicable disease has overtaken communicable diseases as the No.1 cause of mortality worldwide. Crazy as it may seem, our current food system is actually prematurely killing people (not to mention what it's doing to the environment). On the upside, the answer is not complicated. It's really just a matter of returning to a more natural lifestyle: eating real food and getting more physical movement into our days.

How to Reverse the Obesity Epidemic...

It's important to realize you cannot exercise your way out of a poor diet. Starvation diets don't work either. Zoe Harcombe's book, "The Obesity Epidemic: What Caused It? How Can We Stop It?" is an excellent primer exposing why simply eating less and moving more is not the answer to the obesity problem. While there's science to show the number of calories in a pound of fat, it's a major flaw in logic to say that all you have to do to lose that pound of fat is to create an equal caloric deficit. One of the reasons why calorie counting doesn't work has to do with the complexity of the human body. When on a starvation-type diet, your body will tend to shut down various processes in order to survive. For example, by reducing thyroid function, your body will not burn as many calories. That said, intermittently abstaining from food (i.e. intermittent fasting) can be an important factor in helping to optimize your weight. Our ancient ancestors did not have access to food 24/7, so our genetics are optimized to having food at variable intervals, not every few hours. When you eat every few hours for months, years, or decades, never missing a meal, your body forgets how to burn fat as a fuel, and that's really the key to successful weight

management. Another key is to eat more healthy fat, and less net carbs and protein. The conventional low-fat, high-carb recommendation has without a doubt contributed to the obesity epidemic. One of the reasons why saturated fat has been vilified for so long is because it's confused with trans fat, which is an artifact of industrialization. Trans fat does in fact increase your risk of premature death from virtually all diseases – heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's. But while saturated fat has been associated with those health problems (courtesy of being confused with trans fat), it is not the cause of those diseases. It's commonly known that association does not prove causation. And they never separated those two out, which is why saturated fat became so vilified. Most newer studies suggest that saturated fat is beneficial, while trans fat is what creates problems.

Processed Food Is the Culprit; Eating Real Food Is the Answer...

Over the past 60 years or so, a confluence of dramatically altered foods combined with reduced physical exertion and increased exposure to toxic chemicals have created what amounts to a perfect storm. The extensive use of refined sugar – primarily in the form of high-fructose corn syrup, which is added to virtually all processed foods – is at the heart of it all. As a general rule, "food" equals "live nutrients." Nutrients, in turn, feed your cells, optimize your health, and sustain life. Obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension, and heart attacks are all diseases associated with a processed food diet – a clear indication that it does not provide the appropriate nutrition for your body. But, in my view, the single most important driver is consuming over 50 grams of net carbs a day (total carbs-minus fiber) and excessive protein. Once you get net carbs well below 50 grams along with a moderate protein intake of 30-60 grams, along with high quality fat, your body will start to wake up its fat burning metabolism, and over time it will become virtually impossible to be overweight. Fortunately, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is now recommending a daily cap on added sugars, and food manufacturers may soon have to list the amount of added sugars on the nutritional facts label. The goal is to limit added sugar to no more than 10 percent of daily calories. There's also compelling evidence linking antibiotic overuse and obesity, although the reasons why didn't become clear until we discovered how your microbiome influences your weight. Other factors that contribute to obesity and poor health that need to be addressed if we are to successfully address this obesity epidemic include environmental chemicals, inactivity, stress, and lack of sleep.

Regaining Your Health, One Meal at a Time...

In a nutshell, if you're concerned about your weight and health, you need to address the quality of your food, and avoid chemical exposures. Many people end up throwing their hands up in disgust when trying to clean up their diet, complaining that once they start to read labels, they realize there's "nothing safe to eat." If this sounds like you, you're probably still looking at processed foods, trying to figure out which ones are "good" for you, and that's the problem. The list of ingredients to avoid is just about endless, and keeping track of it can be really discouraging. The answer is to create a list of healthy options instead, which is far shorter and easier to remember. The following short list of super-simple, easy-to-remember guidelines will not only improve your nutrition, it will also help you avoid countless chemical exposures that can affect your weight:

- Eat REAL FOOD. Buy whole, ideally organic, foods and cook from scratch. First of all, this will automatically reduce your added sugar consumption, which is the root cause of insulin resistance and weight gain. If you buy organic produce, you'll also cut your exposure to pesticides and genetically engineered ingredients, and in ditching processed foods, you'll

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automatically avoid artificial sweeteners and harmful processed fats. For more detailed dietary advice, please see my free Optimized Nutrition Plan.

- Opt for organic grass-finished meats to avoid genetically engineered ingredients, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and other growth promoting drugs.
- Opt for glass packaging and storage containers to avoid endocrine disrupting chemicals.
- Reduce net carbs to under 50 grams a day and restrict protein to one gram/kilogram of lean body mass. The remaining calories come from high quality fat sources like avocados, butter, coconut oil, macadamia and pecans.

Once you've cleaned up your diet, if you're still struggling you may want to reconsider the timing of your meals. Intermittently fasting can be very effective for helping your body shift from sugar-to fat-burning mode. Also consider increasing your daily physical activity. Ideally, aim for 7,000 to 10,000 steps a day. Later you can add on a more regimented workout routine, which will really help maximize all the other healthy lifestyle changes you've implemented. But for general health and longevity, staying active throughout each day and avoiding sitting takes precedence. Dr. Joseph Mercola.

PS from FactorReady.com: Look into the plant food based diets at: FoodMatters.tv (and obtain their Food Matters dvd), MyHdiet.com and Budwig-Videos.com (download the free Budwig Report at BudwigCenter.com). Note: all 3 of these diets are anti-cancerous and suitable for prevention and/or recovery aid purposes. Please visit our site at FactorReady.com and review the Health tab article as well as various specific Health pdf articles under Downloads (in the Health Tips folders). Stay Well, Stay Prepared and Stay Prayed Up!

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