



beating back obesity

Charles Mills

Food sustains us. So the irony of food killing us isn't lost on researchers who published an article in the British medical journal *Lancet*. They reported that the *over consumption* of food, causing obesity, is now a bigger killer globally than the *shortage* of food. More children are going to bed *fat* than *hungry*.

Almost every country, with the exception of those in sub-Saharan Africa, faces sky-rocketing obesity rates. Where did this crisis arise? And the answer to the question is relatively simple, if we take the time to open our eyes to an overlooked fact: it's not actually our fault.

the source

Obesity isn't genetic. It's earned. What we carry on our bodies was put there by us, spoonful after spoonful. But what we put on our spoons is often the result of slick marketing by some very clever food manufacturer whose goal is to sell products, not promote health. Therein lies the foundation of the obesity problem.

Truth be told, selling us a product isn't really their goal. It's selling us that same product over and over again. So, manufacturers have exploited a

little-known fact: certain foods—or, more to the point, certain food *ingredients*—are actually habit forming. You eat them. You want more. So you eat more and so on. Those ingredients can easily be labelled “WMD”—weapons of mass expansion. They're very fattening.

What are some of those habit-forming caloric bombs? Sugar, cheese, chocolate and meat products top the list. Each is extremely high in kilojoules and/or fat and extremely low in everything else. The old advertising motto, “Bet'cha can't eat just one,” says it all.

sugar

You'll find sugar—or its very dangerous first cousin, high-fructose corn syrup—in just about everything from spaghetti sauce to bread.

Sugar acts much like heroin, cocaine and alcohol, triggering a feel-good dopamine response in the brain. You eat sugar-laced products and suddenly you feel a little better about life. Subconsciously, you connect that good feeling with what you just ate. So, when you want to feel good again, you know exactly what to look for on the supermarket shelf. Unknowingly, you've just formed another tributary to the fat

river flowing into your body.

chocolate

To make chocolate palatable (try eating a raw cacao bean sometime), manufacturers load it up with sugar and fat. While you're savouring it, that highly refined and fermented gooey bean extract is targeting the same spot in your brain as heroin and morphine.

Neal Barnard, author of *Breaking the Food Seduction*, says that chocolate is “basically [a] whole drugstore [with] traces of mild opiates, caffeine, amphetamine-like components and the equivalent of a slight whiff of marijuana, all wrapped into a smooth, sweet taste.”

In goes the chocolate and out goes the waistline.

cheese

That favourite substance often found in dorm rooms and at family picnics gets up to 70 per cent of its kilojoules from belt-loosening milk fat. And, kilogram



for kilogram, it also contains more cholesterol than steak. That's why many lacto-ovo vegetarians are just as obese as meat eaters and suffer from similar rates of heart disease and diabetes.

When you smother perfectly good plant-based foods under bubbling layers of cheese, you're sending the kilojoule count of that dish through the roof and introducing copious amounts of fat into your body. Cheese is almost all fat. It's also very addictive. Just ask a baby.

It appears that mother's milk has a drug-like effect on the baby's brain, ensuring a tight and ongoing bond between mother and child. Researchers are discovering that cow's milk may affect the human brain in exactly the same way. Milk, in all its forms, lures you in with good taste and then holds you in chemical bondage.

meat

Scientists are falling all over each other these days heralding the fact that eating animal products is linked to just about every lifestyle disease that exists, including many forms of cancer.

Most meat and dairy products are high in kilojoules and fats and as Barnard says, "What appears to be happening is that, as meat touches your tongue, opiates are released in the brain, rewarding you—rightly or wrongly—for your calorie-dense food choice and propelling you toward making it a habit."

the result

Bottom line? Thanks to the food industry—an entity fully supported and often subsidised by the government—we've become addicted to what's making us fat. And being fat can be downright deadly.

"But a little fat never hurt anyone, right?" you ask.

Wrong. Even a little excess fat can set in motion a cascade of events that will bring about harm over time. What you see in the mirror is just the tip of the iceberg. The real danger lies inside your body.

We're all cellular creatures. While these microscopic powerhouses we call cells need fat to operate—and small stores of fat do provide a nice backup fuel system when the carbohydrates in our blood supply run a little low—the problems begin when we consume too much fat. And too many of us,

unfortunately, are doing that quite regularly.

When cells become clogged with excessive amounts of fat, we're basically plugging up those powerhouses, making it increasingly difficult for them to do such things as regulate insulin levels, prepare a proper blend of hormones and communicate with the body's vital internal systems. Even the brain finds it harder to think and reason, serve as the control centre to our bodily functions, and understand just how sick we're becoming. Our all-important immune cell production takes a nosedive and our ability to fight diseases—everything from the common cold to cancer—greatly diminishes.

Then there's cholesterol, that artery-clogging ingredient found only in animal products. We, being animals, make plenty of our own. So if other animals ate *us*, they'd have the problems we face. But we eat *them*—a lot of *them*. And when we do, we're creating two deadly situations.

First, we're narrowing our arteries with cholesterol-loaded plaque build-up; and second, we're making our blood thick and sticky with excess oils and fats. So now we're trying to move thick and sticky blood

through smaller and smaller spaces in our arteries, some as thin as a human hair.

It doesn't take much imagination to picture why many overweight individuals suffer from things like macular degeneration, impotence and high blood pressure. Heart attack and stroke hover over them like vultures. No wonder the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reports that "a total vegetarian diet can prevent up to 97 per cent of our heart attacks!"

External fat may look less than appealing, but it's the unseen internal fat that erodes our ability to stay alive. Health, not how we look, should be our main reason for losing weight.

The good news is that as we journey toward a healthy lifestyle, our weight takes care of itself. We end up looking good on both the inside and the outside.

Obesity isn't cute—it's deadly! Being "pleasingly plump" isn't desirable—it's dangerous! Only when we get serious about our weight can we ever hope to effect change. It requires an all-out adjustment to our taste-buds and way of living. Obesity is measured in kilograms. Health is measured in quality years and the unencumbered mind and body to enjoy them. ↻



permanent weight control

If you are serious about weight control and are ready to become healthy inside and out, consider these 11 basic habits practised by health-conscious people everywhere. Start a program today; set your own pace and stick with it. And remember, nothing motivates like success.

- ▶ Eat foods "as grown." Unrefined complex carbohydrate plant foods are high in fibre and nutrients and low in kilojoules, cholesterol and price. If it has a brain, abstain.
- ▶ Never skip breakfast. A hot multi-grain cereal topped with fruit gets you—and keeps you—going strong!
- ▶ Eat two or three meals a day at regular times.
- ▶ Eat slowly. Chewing releases the nutrients in many plant foods.
- ▶ End your main meal (preferably breakfast or lunch) with a piece of fruit. Save kilojoule-rich desserts for special occasions.
- ▶ Skip snacks and night munchies (or eat a piece of fruit).
- ▶ Drink water instead of juices or soft drinks.
- ▶ Exercise daily: 30–60 minutes at moderate levels, or walk 10,000 steps.
- ▶ Allow no harmful substances into your body, such as alcohol, tobacco, caffeine and illicit drugs.
- ▶ Develop hobbies such as music, reading books or sports.
- ▶ Ask God to accompany you and give you strength on your journey to optimum health. He loves you inside and out.

SOURCE: The Complete Health Improvement Program