

U.S. Junk Food Intake Worsening

[E-mail to a friend](#) 

Forsaking healthy, home-cooked meals, more Americans than ever are gorging on calorie-rich, nutrient-poor snacks, sodas and sweets when the dinner bell rings, according to three studies tracking changes in the U.S. diet over the past 25 years.

Americans have increased their energy intake of French fries, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, pizza and Mexican food as part of their meals," conclude researchers led by Dr. Samara Joy Neilsen of the University of North Carolina.

Overall, they found that total (food) energy intake has increased over the past 20 years, with shifts away from meals to snacks and from at-home to away-from-home.

We know in the United States that obesity is on the rise, and we know that this is because of two things -- we're increasing our energy intake across all the age groups as well as decreasing our physical activity.

Focusing on changes in diet researchers compared the results of national U.S. government food consumption surveys conducted in 1977-78, 1989-91 and 1994-96.

In every age group, more and more Americans now consume a large proportion of their daily food intake via snacks rather than sit-down meals, favoring quick, easy -- often non-nutritious -- foods like potato chips, cookies, pizza and other high-calorie treats.

The proportion of energy from restaurant/fast food has increased considerably since the late 1970s. Among 19- to 39-year-olds, away-from-home food consumption just about doubled between 1977 and 1996, **with 28% of young Americans saying they had eaten out on any given day in 1996, compared to just 14% two decades previously.**

Another study, presented by Dr. Alanna Moshfegh of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, broke the survey findings down even further, looking at changes in the popularity of our favorite -- and not-so-favorite -- foods. She found steep increases in consumption of pizza, chocolate and hamburgers, in children as well as adults.

Children are making a definite shift away from milk to sodas and sugary drinks. While 90% of 6- to 11-year-olds in the late 1970s said they had milk on a given day, just 78% could say so by the mid-1990s. At the same time, daily soda consumption rose in the same age group from 31% in the 1970s to 46% two decades later.

The war between milk and soda is indicative of a shift in the U.S. diet, where nutrient-poor "junk foods" are gradually replacing healthier items such as low-fat milk, fruits and vegetables. "One is being consumed at the expense of the other," said the author of a third study, Dr. Ashima Kant of the City University of New York.

Looking closely at data on children's responses to the 1988-1994 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, she found that "energy-dense, nutrient-poor" foods now account for over 30% of **American children's daily energy intake, "with sweeteners and desserts jointly accounting for nearly 25%."**

The population is changing, there's a faster lifestyle, the mix of restaurants is different today, the availability of all types of food in all kinds of settings is much more prominent today.

Annual Experimental Biology 2002 Conference New Orleans, LA April 22, 2002

DR. MERCOLA'S COMMENT:

[E-mail to a friend](#) 

This is one of the reasons why [U.S. immigrants outlive their American-born counterparts](#) and are less likely to die of heart disease, lung cancer and suicide.

90% of the money Americans spend on foods goes towards processed foods.

How can you possibly be healthy with that much processed food in your diet? You really need the reverse ratio to stay healthy, 90% non-processed food and spend plenty of time in your kitchen to prepare it.

You don't have to despair and say poor me because I was born in the U.S. and am going to die sooner than those born in a foreign country. You can take the proactive step and aggressively implement the diet suggestions which will provide the same health benefits that those born outside the U.S. are receiving.

The main strategy? Stay away from processed foods and either pay someone to spend time in the kitchen to prepare your non-processed food meals or do them yourself.

I have less free time than most reading this newsletter, yet I prepare over 95% of my meals myself to preserve my health.

Related Articles:

[Some States Fight Junk Food Sales in Schools](#)

["TV Dinners" for Kids Common](#)