



Nutrition and Obesity Trends

Now there's a title for you—it's like saying "smoking and lung cancer trends." One "good trend" leads to another: smoking led to cancer, which led to the trend of producing cigarettes with less tar and nicotine, followed closely by the development of smoking cessation products and programs and the creation of massive doctor/hospital fees. One trend causes a problem and the problem starts a new trend—sounds like a money making scheme.

In the case of food and fatness, we have the trend of fast food that was initiated by the need to acquire food quickly so we can get to our next place to sit down and participate in something that requires little if any movement. As fast food outlets proliferated, the trend of super-sizing became necessary in order to remain competitive.

Add this to physical activity trends declining based on both parents working, less safe neighborhoods, stationary entertainment (e.g. video games, TV, etc.) and you have a complete recipe for weight gain. And don't forget, all mammals are designed to store food and move only when necessary so when tasty food is everywhere and movement is environmentally discouraged, we innately love it! That is, until the excess starts showing up in all the wrong places. Unfortunately by then it's often too late—our lifestyles are set, becoming our preferred habits. In other words, we love certain foods, we've grown fond of less active types of entertainment, and too much movement is now uncomfortable or does not fit into the preferred or necessary daily schedule.

The low fat and carb trends have passed

Sticking to the smoking analogy, the low fat and carb trends could be likened to the low tar and nicotine phase. And just as the lowering of tar and nicotine had little to no impact on lung cancer, reducing fat and carbs in foods/diet did nothing to slow the growth of the American waistline.

So a quick recap: less physical activity caused by living in the modern world (employment and environment), led to burning fewer calories, and a fast food trend led to a super-sizing trend. All of which have had compounding contributions to the average human girth in developed nations, spiraling health care cost out of control.

In theory, the food industry should make less money if people eat less and therefore there is little business incentive to send that needed message: eat less (because today's world forces you to move less) in order to stay healthy. Trust me, they won't lose money; they will simply capitalize on a new but necessary trend and let's hope it's here to stay.

Packaging regulation, portion size and calorie counting

Because of the rising health care cost due to weight gain, the government has begun to take action very much as it did when it began to regulate tobacco, including labeling. Uncle Sam will be forcing manufacturers and restaurant chains to "call out" servings and calorie counts loud and clear on all packaging and menu boards.

No one wants to be involved in a repeat of the legal problems that continue to plague the tobacco companies; therefore, many in the

food/grocery and restaurant industry are already stepping up to the plate by not just highlighting calories, but also offering favorite foods packaged in single realistic serving sizes. An example is Nabisco's 100-calorie line of its most popular foods/desserts.

Although most of the popular fast food chains still offer "big meals," at least you have the option of not super-sizing or ordering lighter healthy foods. And many stores are telling you to move more; some are even giving out pedometers.

The final true message has been sent: it's all about calories and the best way to control them is through reducing traditional meal or snack sizes. Packaging snacks—or meals for that matter—as a single realistic serving based on the average daily movement (calories burned) of the typical human living in a developed nation is one huge step in helping you control what's innate, which is to consume everything placed in front of you. This fall, Apex will be launching its own twist on this theme, with its 100 Calories line.

The Apex Fitness Fast Food Contribution

Well, maybe not all of our 100 Calories line is *exactly* "fitness food." But it's still healthy calories, and everyone has their special times when they like or are "forced" to snack, such as watching late night TV, a ballgame or simply needing something to put in their mouth while waiting for a long overdue meal. While the big food manufacturers' 100-calorie lines are the same basic not-so-healthy foods, our 100 Calories snacks are 100% natural. The Potato Crisps have 60-65% less fat than fried potato chips, but most importantly are air-popped using natural flavorings, giving you far more volume/chips for the 100 calories.

The Granola Bars are superior to their competitors because of a macronutrient content that delivers more satiety per 100 calories.

The best part of all is the fact that these healthier snacks are at least as tasty as their not-so-healthy counterparts!

The Apex 100 Calories line is perfect for kids' lunches (especially since PE has been discontinued in most schools) and other snacking times.

So add these items to your (and other family households pantries on the Apex Fitness Fast Food shelf and move out the other stuff—and let's see if we can still enjoy snacking while we control weight.

A list of "trends" to incorporate and pass on

Although we can't control "genes" or the innate appetite mechanisms we are born with, we can alter the environment so that our natural instincts don't get the best of us. Of course, the most effective way to keep our genes from expressing themselves would be to move to a deserted island—but since that is not generally an option, below are seven common family environmental clean-up actions that can help keep genes "sleeping":

1. Stock more nutrient-dense foods and beverages and high fiber foods.
2. Reduce access to high-calorie, nutrient-poor beverages and foods.
3. Balance the message/use of nutrient-poor foods: don't use as a reward but do not completely forbid.
4. Eat breakfast.
5. Find ways to move and make it fun or profitable whenever possible.
6. Reduce TV/video game time or any other stationary entertainment to a maximum of two hours daily.
7. Lead by example—do the best you can to eat well and control weight.

We can discuss each of the above in more detail at another time, but for now let's just work on stocking the better foods/snacks, and the rest will start to fall into place.