

A Fatter World

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Moonflower Market

We are a fat country. It isn't exactly news that one of the few metrics that America still leads the world in is our obesity rate. What is news is that the rest of the world is catching up with us.

A study released by The Lancet, a medical journal, which involved nearly 500 researchers across 50 countries who tracked and compared health data from 1990 to 2010, found that over the last two decades the global rate of obesity has risen by 82%. In all but the world's poorest countries, people are getting fatter at an alarming rate.

Even more shocking is the fact that, for the first time, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), like heart disease, diabetes and strokes, are the leading causes of years spent sick or injured.

That means that, even though people are living longer, their quality of life is getting worse. These chronic diseases are not cheap either.

"In many cases being overweight at age 50 will not only double but actually triple or quadruple the incident rate for many diseases," says Dr. Y Claire Wang of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University.

Wang estimates that by the year 2030 the cost of treating these obesity related diseases in America will top \$66 billion. Treating these diseases globally over the next 20 years could cost \$30 trillion, according to a report by the World Economic Forum and the Harvard School of Public Health.

So what happened? How can it be that obesity is a bigger global health crisis than hunger?

The problem of obesity is not as simple as it used to be.

Eating the wrong food and not getting enough exercise, though largely responsible, are not the only reason that the world now has a bigger problem with people being overweight than under weight.

There is no doubt that people are eating too much of the wrong stuff and not moving around enough afterwards. There is no doubt that the percentage of Americans that are obese and overweight- 35.7% and 74.1% respectively, according to the World Health Organization (WHO)- would be dramatically reduced if people starting eating fresher, more nutritious food. And no doubt that if you got people getting just 20 minutes of exercise per day (that can include just walking around the block) in addition to eating healthier, then those numbers would be a fraction of what they are today.

But to leave the solution at that is to miss a much more pernicious culprit that is helping to fatten the developed and developing world. That culprit is the industrialization of our food and health products.

Though it is still in its infancy, the study of obesogens, a subset of endocrine-disrupting chemicals, is already yielding some frightening evidence about the extent to which the chemicals in our food, water, cosmetics and air are altering our body's natural hormonal balance to increase the development of our body's fat cells.

A recent New York Times article details a study that showed how mice, exposed to just one part per billion of DES, an obesogen, at birth, gained significantly more flab than mice that had not been exposed, despite no real difference between the mice in exercise or diet.

A major reason that you may not have heard about these hormone disrupting chemicals is that there is a concerted effort being put forth by large chemical companies to keep these chemicals unregulated.

In much the same way that cigarette companies for years sought to block research and publication on the detrimental effects of smoking, the chemical lobby is doing its best to keep the public in the dark about these chemicals. Chemicals that many Americans consume everyday and that are being shown to contribute not only to obesity, but also to cancers and dysfunctions in sex organs.

So what can you do to stay as far clear of these poisons as possible?

Fortunately there are a few quick and easy steps that you can take to help you avoid some of the worst of these chemicals.

Don't drink out of plastic single serving containers- Most plastic containers contain Bisphenol A (BPA) and a group of plastic softeners called phthalates. Both of these substances have been shown to contribute to serious health problems, particularly in children. So instead of grabbing a plastic bottle next time your thirsty, fill up a glass or metal container, like a Klean Kanteen, with water or juice.

Eat Organic and Non-Genetically Modified (Non-GMO) Produce- Not all produce is created equal. The fertilizers, chemicals, and genetically modified seeds used to grow much of the produce that you see in the grocery store can contain chemicals that may have long-term negative effects on your health. Rather than buying apples grown in Chile or tomatoes grown in greenhouses all the way across the country, go down to your local health food store or farmers market. Locally grown and Organic produce not only is better for you but tastes better and keeps your money in your community.

Look at the ingredients- Before you throw something into your shopping cart, take a second and look at the ingredient panel. Are there any names longer than three syllables? Is there anything listed that looks like it belongs in a science lab? Does it have corn syrup, hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils? If the answer is yes

to any of these, put the box back and find a substitute with ingredients that you would want in your body.

At Moonflower Market we have done most of this work for you.

Our buyers purchase only the healthiest and most ethically sourced food. None of our products have corn syrup as a sweetener, artificial colors, artificial flavors, or MSG. We do not accept any dairy products that contain growth hormones and we carry no commercially grown produce. Wherever possible our products are organic, non-GMO, locally grown and produced, Fair Trade and free of preservatives. And as a non-profit, community run, natural foods store (soon to be Utah's only co-op!) you know that your money is staying in and benefitting the Moab area.