

# Good research paper about battling the bulge: analyzing the root causes behind am...

[Health & Medicine](#), [Obesity](#)



Healthy eating and proper nutrition are tasks becoming more and more difficult in Western culture's fast-food based environment. Obesity in the American public is a growing issue that over the last two decades have turned into nothing short of a global epidemic. Research nutritionists agree that the root cause of American obesity is caused by over consumption of sugar, fat and salt. Sugar and its counterparts of high fructose syrup and corn syrup are the worst perpetrators of this issue and the root causes of the obesity epidemic. Globalization of economies has led to a reduction in the diversity of foods in the human diet, restricting and compartmentalizing the foods we eat. As many people are attracted to the western model of fast and easy meal and snack preparation, the pitfalls of our food culture become a vicious repetitious cycle of supply and demand. (Francis, 2012) The current status of the fast food culture begs the question of where an individual should draw the line when it comes to overeating or consumption of unhealthy food. While the personal accountability and responsibility should not be discounted, unaccountable food companies use science not to help the pertinent issues surrounding sugar, fat and salt intake, but instead to thwart them. They deliver food that is easy to make, delicious to eat and cheap to make; but at the cost of the health of the population. With the problem of public obesity comes multiple pertinent health issues; diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, gout, cancers, heart attacks, and more. So how do we escape from underneath the mountain of soft drinks, candy bars and artificial foods that we have buried ourselves under?

“ The Extraordinary Science of Addictive Junk Food,” a 2013 New York Times article exposing the harsh realities of the food industry business. It cites

<https://assignbuster.com/good-research-paper-about-battling-the-bulge-analyzing-the-root-causes-behind-americas-obesity-epidemic/>

perturbing statistics from 1999, where more than half of American adults were considered overweight, with nearly one-quarter of that population clinically defined as obese. (Moss, 2013) That's forty million adults in America alone. Childhood rates of obesity shoot past 12 million. By the end of 2013, those numbers had climbed to one in three adults and one in five kids being considered clinically obese. It further goes on to cite twenty-four million Americans diagnosed with diabetes, and another seventy nine million entering pre-diabetic stages, and another eight million being diagnosed with gout. (Moss, 2013) There additional health issues associated with obesity are diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, gout, cancers, heart attacks, and an increased likelihood of transferring poor eating habits to future generations. Studies show that American youths today will suffer more chronic disease and premature deaths as a result of their poor eating habits combined with their lack of physical activity, than from exposure to tobacco, drugs, and alcohol combined. (Fox, 2005) Noted Yale University professor of psychology and public health, Kelly Brownell makes a startling comparison between unhealthy food and other health issues on the market: " As a culture, we've become upset by the tobacco companies advertising to children, but we sit idly by while the food companies do the very same thing. And we could make a claim that the toll taken on the public health by a poor diet rivals that taken by tobacco." - (Moss, 2013) Because values and ideologies are constantly changing in Western society and culture, today's youths are at a major disadvantage when it comes to their food and exercise. In sub-burbs and cities the ability to bike or walk to school is decreasing as car traffic increases and safety becomes more of a concern. (Fox, 2005) Overcrowded

cities are building crowded housing divisions with no space for open areas and parks. Schools keeping naturally active children quiet and in their seats for roughly eight hours a day, cutting back on physical education classes and recess times in favour of other pursuits. (Fox, 2005) From the start, children are at a major disadvantage, having to work extra hard just to find space to exercise. More pertinent issues result as youths are bombarded with technology driven toys and apps that keep them at home and sedentary in front of the computer or television. In the home environment, busy families are relying more on fast food and takeout and less on healthy home-cooked meals. Parents and caregivers will increasingly stock their fridges with sodas and junk food in order to satisfy their children's cravings. Supermarket shelves are increasingly folding to big name company advertising plans. (Fox, 2005)

In "The Extraordinary Science of Addictive Junk Food," the most important food related health concerns being faced by North America are brought to light. The article discusses the most pertinent issues on the topic of obesity in America, ranging from the mind's controls on overeating to the hidden power of some processed foods to make people feel hungrier still. The marketing departments of companies like Kraft and Nabisco, General Mills and Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola and Mars, are the determining factor surrounding the growing problem of obesity in North America. The C. E. O.'s of these multi-billion dollar companies have done their part in creating and marketing products that pose significant greatest health concerns to the population in North America and beyond. (Moss, 2013) However, there comes to light the question of accountability for the fault of this issue. Who

can and who should be held responsible for—what is considered by many as an epidemic—are contested within the public and private views. The consumer's poor level of willpower and a "give-the-people-what-they-want" attitude (Moss, 2013) on the part of the food manufacturers has made for an economy and culture dependant on this new form of hedonism. Consumers get fat bellies, and companies get fat wallets. The problem is that even with fully functional and proven healthy items on the supermarket shelves, consumers will always buy what they like. The slippery slope comes from what they like tasting good; and if it tastes good there is a chance of an overabundance of sugar or other fats. It is important to gain a deeper understanding of what causes Americans to overeat.

Multiple billions of dollars are spent on throughout the global market to find out what makes a product crave-able to consumers. Scientists spend their entire careers testing focus groups, altering their product just so, so that consumers reach what is called the "bliss point," the moment where the consuming of a product creates a further craving for it. (Moss, 2013) The problem of obesity and its corresponding health risks is not new. It is not even considered new within the last decade. The root of these issues arose in the 80's and 90's when food-processing companies were at a major turning point; how to create new and overarching demand in the market. (Moss, 2013)

High fructose corn syrup is an artificial sweetener that replaces sugar in processed and refined foods. This high-fructose corn syrup is a synthetic product derived from cornstarch, taken through a complicated conversion process that transforms it into a clear liquid. As it is artificial, it does not

metabolize in the body the same way as regular sugar does. (Sewell, 2008) Whereas regular sugar triggers an insulin response in the body to convert it into energy, high fructose corn syrup travels directly to the liver where it is stored as fat. (Sewell, 2008) According to studies by the US Department of Agriculture, Americans consume more than sixty-three pounds of high fructose corn syrup annually. One of the worst offenders of this is found in carbonated soda. These drinks have up to eight teaspoons of sugar in every can. (Rose, 2009)

In January of 2013, Coca-Cola released a string of ads dedicated to promoting bottled water and low calorie drinks as a way of countering the obesity trend. However, this was met with scorn from critics as they continued to push their sugary name-sake in the market. Coca-Cola makes over twenty billion dollars in sales annually. (Moss, 2013) The average American consumes over 60 gallons of soda per year. (Sewell, 2008) Most soft drinks contain approximately 40 grams of high fructose corn syrup and roughly twenty grams of sugar (depending on the brand.) (Sewell, 2008) This accounts for 33 percent of the simple sugars consumed (Fructose, Sucrose and Glucose) in the American diet. (Sewell, 2008) High fructose corn syrups can cause increased levels of triglycerides, along with high cholesterol levels. (Sewell, 2008) In some studies it has caused scarring on arterial walls that tricks the body into producing cholesterol to help heal arterial walls. Plain and simple, high fructose corn syrup has no nutritional value, and in fact can cause serious detriments to health. (Sewell, 2008)

Dr. Elizabeth Parks, researcher at South-western Medical Center has conducted studies showing the speed at which our bodies create fat from

fructose. According to Dr. Parks, avoiding fructose in its natural forms found in fruit juice or high fructose corn syrup is the best way to lose weight. (Sewell, 2008) However, high-fructose corn syrup is so pervasive in shelved processed foods that it is hard to avoid it. Manufacturers like Nestle, Kraft, and Coco-Cola prefer using this as an alternative because it a cheaper sweetening source than regular sugar. In addition to being economical because you can use less product with more of a result, it gives food a longer shelf life. (Sewell, 2008) Unlike other natural sugars found in healthier snack alternatives, fructose corn syrup does not stimulate the pancreas to produce insulin and leptin, hormones that signals the brain to turn off the appetite controls and help regulate body weight. As a consequence of the overconsumption of high fructose corn syrup in many of our everyday foods, there is often a tendency to consume more calories than one would had they chosen a healthier alternative. (Sewell, 2008) High fructose corn syrups and other sugars are found in snacks such as candy, soft drinks, sports drinks and other sweets. What many do not know is that they are also found in things like pasta sauces, condiments, breads, chips, and more. (NewsRX, 2014) The use of the term added is important to note, because there are other sugars that occur naturally in healthy, nutritious foods, such as milk and fruits. (NewsRX, 2014)

Rational and healthy food choices have become increasingly difficult to make in a globalized economy where the profits are maximized for multinational corporations who actively ignore nutritional needs of people. (Francis, 2012) A link between poverty and obesity exists in many global countries. How are people supposed to make healthy eating choices when a McDonald's Happy

Meal costs less than a bunch of bananas? (Leigh, 2004) A healthier system of food production, not just increased production, is seen as the key to long-term improved nutrition for everyone affected by this epidemic. (Francis, 2012) In order to combat the rising health concerns, emphasis should be placed on research defining what we understand about food quality and the need for nutritious food. (Francis, 2012) There is a moral and ethical obligation for production companies to focus on food quality and nutrition as opposed to a focus on maximizing profit. Possible solutions include studying and implementing more diverse products and access to better ingredients, and reducing the array of attractive fast foods while increasing reliance on fruits and vegetables. (Francis, 2012)

Food industry legend and would be saviour, Howard Moskowitz, is a key figure in industry product testing. Moskowitz runs a consulting firm in New York, where for more than three decades he has “ optimized” a variety of products for big industry names like Campbell’s, Kraft and Pepsi. (Moss, 2013) Moskowitz’s path to “ mastering the bliss point” began when the U. S. Army hired him to work in its research labs during World War Two. (Moss, 2013) The military had been trying to learn how to get soldiers to eat more rations when in the field. Previous studies on the matter had proven that over time, soldiers would gradually find the meals they were provided with so boring that they would toss them away and not complete them. This presented a serious issue as the soldiers would then not get all the calories they needed for proper nutrition. (Moss, 2013) If this was not remedied, it would prove an even bigger problem for the army, who could not utilize unfit soldiers in battle. Moskowitz’s goal was to find out what was causing this. “



They liked flavourful foods like turkey tetrazzini, but only at first; they quickly grew tired of them. On the other hand, mundane foods like white bread would never get them too excited, but they could eat lots and lots of it without feeling they'd had enough." (Moss, 2013) This condition would later become known as "sensory-specific satiety." (Moss, 2013) Sensory-specific satiety is the tendency for big, distinct flavours to overwhelm the eaters' brain, which responds by reducing one's desire to have more of whichever food contains it. In later years sensory-specific satiety became a guiding principle for the food industry. (Moss, 2013) Big name companies like Coca-Cola and Doritos are excellent examples showcasing this theory; their food piques the taste buds enough to be tasty, but don't contain distinct, overriding flavours that signal the brain to stop eating.

A pertinent example of a company creating demand on an uneducated public is General Mills. Namely popular for their sugary cereal production, (Lucky Charms, Reese's, Cinnamon Toast Crunch,) General Mills sought to branch out from sit down meals and create a product that the public could eat on the go. (Moss, 2013) Their focus groups were mainly made up of mothers who were fed up with the morning rush of having to get their kids fed and out the door. Thus, the breakfast on the go Yoplait brand was formed. (Moss, 2013) Yoplait took what was traditionally considered an unsweetened breakfast item into a popular option that appealed to moms everywhere. However, the nutritional label tells a different story. Yoplait yogurt was made with twice as much sugar per serving as General Mills' Lucky Charms cereal. (Moss, 2013) But, because of yogurt's longstanding positive image as a healthy and wholesome snack, the ingredients were

never questioned. By the end of the production year, Yoplait's annual revenue topped five hundred million dollars in sales. (Moss, 2013) These numbers, as well as those of other popular snacks like Lunchables, continue to rise.

Plain white sugar is not the only issue in foods today, which is probably where a lot of the confusion comes from. Many consumers are not properly educated on how to read a nutrition label. Labels of sucrose, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, fruit concentrate, tartazine, brominated vegetable oil, azodicarbonamide and butylated hydroxyanisole are found on many of our everyday foods, but few individuals actually know what these words mean. (Kim, 2013) Even just that short list is full of possibly carcinogenic, asthma-inducing, corrosive and mutating cell preservatives that can be found in Mac ' n' Cheese, certain sodas, bread flours and cereals. (Kim, 2013)

Jeffery Dunn, an ex-executive of Coca-Cola fired for his desires to implement a healthier way of thinking at the company, has some interesting ideas on how to encourage consumers to eat healthy snacks instead of turning to the typical junk food alternative. (Moss, 2013) The use of "strategic storytelling" in ad campaigns can be used for good or evil. But Dunn posits that "We act like a snack, not a vegetable." (Moss, 2013) By implementing the mindset people have around junk food, he claims he could "exploit the rules of junk food to fuel the baby-carrot conversation. We are pro-junk-food behaviour but anti-junk-food establishment." (Moss, 2013) The way companies market products to consumer's matters just as much as the product being sold. If healthy food were marketed in a way that appealed to the desires and brain

stimulations similar to when eating junk food, we could have a revolution! Pharmacological studies conducted by Life Extension RX have used the following vitamins and medications to help reverse damage caused by excess sugar in the diet. Benfotiamine also known as vitamin B I, is known to reduce high blood sugar levels. (Sewell, 2008) AlphaLipoc acid, an antioxidant, Carnosine, an amino acid is known to suppresses the complications of diabetes, (Sewell, 2008) Vitamin C is known to reduce uric acid reducing the risk of gout and heart disease., Acety-Lcarnitine, an over the counter antioxidant, helps improve blood pressure. (Sewell, 2008) But putting a band aid over these issues will not solve this epidemic. Food manufacturers need to take extra care in their product ingredients. This includes not only introducing healthy ingredients to their products, but making an effort to properly educate consumers about what their nutrition labels mean. Finally, the biggest push needs to come from the general public. They need to make the effort to educate themselves as opposed to picking the easiest, fastest, and cheapest meal off the supermarket shelves.

## **Works Cited**

Fox, Nichols. " Battle of the Bulge." The Washington Post 13 Mar. 2005: n. page. ProQuest 5000. Web. Nov. 2014.

Francis, Charles. " Eating Planet: Nutrition Today - a Challenge for Mankind and for the Planet." Rev. of Eating Planet. NACTA Journal 56. 3 (2012): 87-88. ProQuest 5000. Web. Nov. 2014.

Kim, Susanna. " Home Lifestyle. Lifestyle 11 Food Ingredients Banned Outside the U. S. That We Eat." Online Article. ABC News. ABC Newsgroup, 26 June 2013. Web. Nov. 2014. .

<https://assignbuster.com/good-research-paper-about-battling-the-bulge-analyzing-the-root-causes-behind-americas-obesity-epidemic/>

Leigh, Suzanne. " Too Much Food, Not Too Little, Plagues U. S. Children." USA Today [Macleam, VA] 10 Mar. 2004: n. page. ProQuest 5000. Web. Nov. 2014.

Moss, Michael. " The Extraordinary Science of Addictive Junk Food." Editorial. The New York Times 20 Feb. 2013, Magazine sec.: n. page. Thenytimes. com. 20 Feb. 2013. ProQuest 5000. Web. Nov. 2014.

Obesity, Fitness and Wellness Week. " The Obesity Society; U. S. Adult Consumption of Added Sugars Increased by More Than 30% Over Three Decades." NewsRX 22 Nov. 2014: n. page. ProQuest 5000. Web. Nov. 2014.

Rose, David. " Put Cap on Obesity among Primary Pupils with a Fizzy Drinks Tax, Campaigners Say." The Times [London, UK] 11 Dec. 2009, 29th ed.: n. page. Print. ProQuest 5000. Web. Nov. 2014.

Sewell, Doug. " High Fructose Corn Syrup: 'How Sweet It Is'" Michigan Chronicle 18 Nov. 2008: n. page. ProQuest 5000. Web. Nov. 2014.