

# Fast food linked to obesity essay sample

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BUSTER**

A large controversy in the field of health and food today is the effects that fast food and industrialized food have on our wellness. The convenience of obtaining food has become the main objective in society, but is it taking a toll on our health? Fast food restaurants such as (but not limited to) McDonald's and Burger King are a major aspect to how a lot of our generation fills their stomach. Many researchers have been trying to link the increase in obesity to the consumption of industrialized food within the past few decades, but some argue that lack of physical activity has a part in the incline of overweight Americans as well.

To get a complete analysis of exactly how our health is being affected by fast food industries, I am researching the following questions: Why is fast food so popular? How does fast food consumption affect adolescent obesity? What health risks are related to fast food consumption? What are other factors that could possibly contribute to the obesity problem? And should fast food be completely omitted from a healthy diet? These questions will be helpful to determine healthy lifestyle choices for families who do not know which way to go when dealing with the issue of industrialized food.

Conducting research was a necessity before I could form an opinion about the fast food industry. During a two week period in October 2010, I examined six different sources. These sources include four academic journal articles, one book, and one magazine article. The magazine article by Clare Ulrich hinted on almost all of my questions but did not go into specific detail about each one. One academic journal by Stender, Dyerberg, and Astrup was not very helpful in answering my preliminary questions, but had me posing another question about the ingredients that make fast food so unhealthy.

The academic journal article written by Raymond Gozzi Jr. answered some of my questions about why Americans keep going back to their favorite fast food restaurants. An article from the book *Food and an academic journal article* by Nestle and Young were very helpful in expressing different factors that could be affecting obesity rates. Glassner, Barry. “Environmental Factors and Genetics Are the Source of Obesity.” *Food*. Ed. Jan Grover. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008. 158-165. Print.

Barry Glassner, a sociology professor at the University of Southern California, discusses his beliefs that obesity is not linked to food consumption in his academic journal article *Environmental Factors and Genetics Are the Source of Obesity*. Glassner suggests that other factors such as genetics, stress and inactivity are responsible for the obesity epidemic among Americans. The author mentions that there are so many diet fads because no one knows exactly what foods make a person gain weight or if any foods do at all. Glassner includes in his article that genes are the main reason for overweight people. He says that natural selection and natural resistance to obesity are the main factors to weight gain.

Then the author links economic stress to the reason Americans are now more overweight. The article says that stress is a major factor to eating habits and since the economy is doing poorly right now, Americans are over eating to alleviate the stress and not staying active due to long work hours. Glassner claims that most fast food bashers try to convince the public that there is a direct link to obesity and fast food consumption, but provide no

real evidence to support their thesis. This article helped answer my research questions about other factors that could affect the incline in obesity.

Gozzi Jr., Raymond. “ The Fast Food Franchise as Metaphor.” *A Review of General Semantics* 53. 3 (1996): 322-325. Print. Raymond, Gozzi Jr. is an Associate Professor of the Television-Radio Department at Ithaca College. He wrote the academic journal article, *The Fast Food Franchise as Metaphor* which states, “ A fast food franchise is an embodied metaphor for the perfect system...” (323). The author believes that people love knowing they will get the same product every time they come back. Gozzi also looks at other business franchises and compares them to human love of predictability. The crash of the fast food era is also mentioned in this article. The author explains that the fast food industry has changed in order to maintain steady business flow by adding salads and breakfast, but he also wonders how long franchises will last in our society. This information was useful to me in answering my question about why fast food is so popular.

None of my other information elaborates on Americans wanting fast food because of the familiarity so this article brought a different prospective to my research. Stender, S., J. Dyerberg, and A. Astrup. “ Fast food: unfriendly and unhealthy.” *International Journal of Obesity* 31. 6 (2007): 887-890. Print. The academic journal article, “ Fast food: unfriendly and healthy,” by Stender, Dyerberg, and Astrup, looks at the more factual aspect of the effects of fast food consumption. Stender and Dyerberg work together at the Department of Clinical Biochemistry and at the Gentofte Hospital at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark while Astrup also works at the

University of Copenhagen for the Department of Human Nutrition and the Centre for Advanced Food Studies. This article examines actual studies of the difference of an American who eats fast food frequently and one who does not.

The authors of the article include the fattening and unhealthy contents of industrialized food from the chains McDonald's and KFC. To finish the article, the authors include a section about some items that are being done to make the fast food industry more consumer friendly such as nutritional labeling on all food products. This article made me consider and answered another question that would be beneficial to my research: What contents in fast food make nutritionists brand is so unhealthy? Americans need to know what to look out for in certain fast foods so we are able to limit or omit the unhealthy aspects from our diets. Ulrich, Clare. "The Economics of Obesity: Costs, Causes, and Controls." *Human Ecology* 33. 3 (2005): 10-13. Print. Clare Ulrich discusses the effects that the fast food industry has on the American population. She begins her article with a heavy statistic that death from obesity, has increased by 33 percent from 1990.

Ulrich obtains some of her information about the cost and reasons why people choose fast food from the presentation, "Economics of obesity," by John Cawley. The author also uses information from the Surgeon General about the percentage of Americans who are overweight or obese. She also includes the percent of childhood obesity in the United States and some possible reasons that this number has increased since 1950. This article was helpful to me in answering the questions: Why is fast food so popular? How

does fast food consumption affect adolescent obesity? What are the health risks are related to fast food consumption? Although this article did give me useful information about my inquiries, it did not go into extensive detail about what keeps Americans hooked on fast food, how obesity effects children, and how fast food is accurately linked to fast food consumption.

Wood, Marcia. “ Kids, Fast Food, and Obesity.” *Agricultural Research* 57. 9 (2009): 20-21. Print.

Marcia Woods writes about the results of a study of kid’s meals at fast food restaurants done by pediatrician Jason A. Mendoza in her article Kids, Fast Food, and Obesity. Wood says that Mendoza and his team of researchers from the Children’s National Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine, did an analysis of ten fast food franchises who served kid’s meals. The author says Mendoza found only three percent of the meals met the nutritional set by the National School Lunch Program for children ages five to nine.

Wood includes why the meals did not make the grade based on Mendoza’s research. The author says the research is conducted because of the growing numbers of childhood obesity and the increase in meals eaten away from home. Woods concludes her article with potential health consequences from being obese as a child. This article answered my question about the effects of childhood obesity and also my latest question about the content in fast food that makes it deemed unhealthy. Mendoza’s research is very helpful as a credible source that explains why children could be gaining more weight.

Young, Lisa R., and Marion Nestle. “ Portion Sizes and Obesity: Responses of

Fast-Food Companies.” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 28. 2 (2007): 238-248. Print.

Portion Sizes and Obesity: Responses of Fast-Food Companies by Lisa R. Young and Marion Nestle discusses the relationship between the rise in portion sizes and weight gain among Americans. The authors believe that food is not specifically the reason for the increased obesity rate, but the much larger portion sizes since 1998. This article examines and compares the sizes of the most popular items sold at fast food restaurants: soft drinks, hamburgers, and French fries. The three fast food franchises chosen for the research were McDonald’s, Wendy’s and Burger King. The data in the article includes a table of portion sizes in the years 1998, 2002 and 2006.

The research shows that the portions have increased in almost all areas. Nestle and Young also look at what these fast food franchises have done to reduce portion sizes in response to media pressure. The authors then include data from the original sizes of soda, French fries and hamburgers in 1955 to 2006. Young and Nestle conclude that fast food restaurants have done very little or nothing to reduce portion sizes and promote healthy numbers or caloric intake. The article was useful to answer my questions: What are other factors that could possibly contribute to the obesity problem? And should fast food be completely omitted from a healthy diet? Portion size is a big factor to weight gain with any type of food and the studies showed me that the portions since 1998 and 1955 have drastically changed which could link it to obesity.