

Obesity

[Science](#), [Epidemiology](#)



Because of the omnipotence of fast food chains in America, when we feel the urge for an easy meal, Americans, in general, immediately look to the fast food nation for a quick suppression to their hunger. Because we live in a time-is-money society the most efficient means of hunger satisfaction is the almighty drive-through. Corporations spend billions of dollars advertising to enhance sales of their products. With American catching on to the lack of healthy food options in the fast food nation, fast food chains began campaigning healthier food such as their salads and fruit cups. However salads may sound healthy but a Southwest Salad with Grilled Chicken from McDonald's has 320 calories and 90 grams of fat. Where's the "healthy" in that. Now that Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in the U. S. we need to re-evaluate the importance of healthy eating. By increasing awareness of the obesity epidemic in America we can begin to reverse the trend in weight gain. Obesity is defined as a measure of Body Mass Index (BMI) - a ratio of weight to height that is calculated by the following formula: $BMI = \frac{\text{weight (kg)}}{\text{height (m)}^2}$. With an unexplained and escalating prevalence over the past three decades, obesity has features of an epidemic, an outbreak of disease that spreads more quickly and more extensively than would normally be expected. Since 1980, the prevalence of obesity has doubled among American adults (from 15% to over 34%) and tripled among youth, 2 through 19 years of age (from 5.5% to 16.9%). Although the trend of increasing obesity is seen across all ethnic/racial, socioeconomic, and educational groups, there are disparities in certain segments of the population. For example, obesity is more prevalent among non-Hispanic black women (49.6%) and Mexican-American women (45.1%)

than non-Hispanic white women (33.0%). These distinct rates among people with shared backgrounds are consistent with both heritable and cultural factors, but certainly shape health burdens within these specific groups. The global trend of increasing technology, automation, motorized transportation and sedentary occupations contributes to a comfortable lifestyle that requires minimal physical activity. While once essential for survival, regular physical activity is optional in our modern, low energy-demanding environment. The vast health benefits of physical activity include decreased mortality and reduced risk for several chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and osteoporosis. The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity walking briskly, biking, water aerobics or 75 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity jogging, jumping rope, swimming laps, in addition to muscle-strengthening activities sit-ups, weight-lifting twice per week for adults. Yet, less than half of Americans report that they engage in the recommended amount of physical activity.