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America's Weight Issues

Statistics at *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)* show that 66% of adults are either overweight or obese. Why is this occurring? Here are some of the reasons:

Results of the *National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey*

Americans spend more on eating foods away from the home: spending 27% in 1970, for food away from home and by 2006, that figure almost doubled to 46%.

Serving sizes have increased – a serving of French fries from McDonald's contains 3 times more calories than when the franchise began.

Almost 9 out of 10 Americans reported that diet and nutrition are important to them, according to a survey by the American Dietetic Association (ADA) however, less than half (41%) of Americans reported they are striving more to achieve a healthy diet.

Study at Pennington Biomedical Research Center

A study at Pennington Biomedical Research Center, part of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, which was published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, has found that eating less and exercising more are equally good at contributing to losing weight.

Weight loss has been positively identified as an important factor in improving cardiovascular health, spurring changes like improved function in blood vessel response to changes in blood pressure and a 15% improvement in oxygen use.

Those Americans who failed to achieve recommendations for physical exercise – moderate activity at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week or vigorous activity at least 60 minutes a day, three times a week – were 2 times at risk to regain weight as those who met exercise recommendations.

Stress and Sweets

Recent research at the University of Cincinnati has discovered that when one reason why people under stress are driven to eat sugar foods is that eating or drinking sweets decreases the production of the stress-related hormones glucocorticoids.

Glucocorticoids are released when psychological or physical stressors activate a part of the brain called the "stress axis." Glucocorticoids help an individual survive and recover from stress, however they have been linked to increased abdominal obesity and decreased immune function when produced in large amounts.

Dangers of Sugar Addiction

In a study published in *Obesity Research*, scientists experimenting on rats had them binge on sugar substances. When they withdrew all sugar, the rats they exhibited telltale signs of "the shakes" and changes in brain chemistry, similar to those produced by drug withdrawal. Animals that binged on normal food with no sugar and received an opioid blocker did not show these withdrawal signs.

The key to the addiction process is that sugar causes the production of the brain's natural opioids. Over time, the brain gets addicted to its own opioids, the same as heroin or morphine.

So the only productive solution to stress is to employ stress relief techniques instead of resorting to harmful sugar intake.

Sources: Statistics Related to Overweight and Obesity *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services* (<http://win.niddk.nih.gov>) **Combination of Sugar and Fat Key to Animal Model of Bingeing** *Obesity* (2008) 16 9, 1981ñ1981. doi:10.1038/oby.2008.387 **Bingeing, Self-restriction, and Increased Body Weight in Rats With Limited Access to a Sweet-fat Diet** *Obesity* (2008) 16 9, 1998ñ2002. doi:10.1038/oby.2008.328 **Carbohydrate Fat Interactions and Obesity Examined by a Two-Compartment Computer Model** *Obesity Research* 12, 2013 - 2022 (Dec 2004)