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Report Revision

## Factors That Cause Obesity

### Statistics on obesity

From 1963 to 1980, the percentage of overweight children was low and stable in America. From 1999-2002, it more than doubled in percentage, and more than 65 percent or 125 million American adults were overweight or obese. More than nine million of those adults were more than 90 pounds above their normal range for height and gender (Loonin 14). Peter Owen, a published author of children’s and young adult’s books, wrote a book called “Teens Health and Obesity.” Owen states that, “More than two out of three Americans are overweight or obese, and obesity will soon pass smoking as the leading cause of preventable death in the United States” (Owens 9). Owen believes

that if Americans don’t change what they are doing to get these statistics, obesity will soon be above the highest cause of deaths we could have stopped.

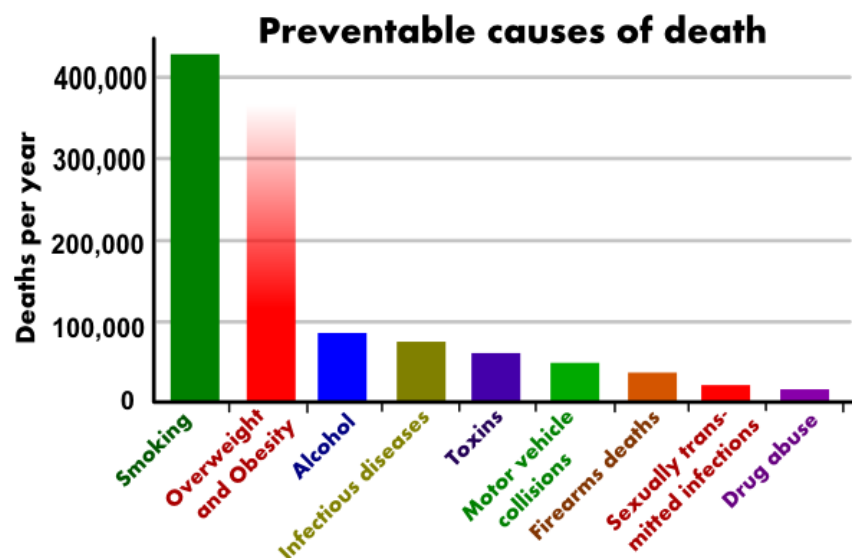


Figure 1 the most preventable causes of death in the United States

There are many factors that play into being obese or not. The major ones that are going to be discussed in this report are technology, food, and exercise. These topics are very controversial, and have many things that play a factor in each of them. People have different opinions and different studies have been done to prove both sides of the arguments.

## I. Technology

### Sedentary lifestyles

Technology is a major part of today's society. It is almost everywhere we look and is growing larger every day. Children growing up are spending most of their time on these new technologies instead of doing labor or playing outside like kids used to do. Children are living sedentary lifestyles. This means they don't get that physical activity that they should, instead they just sit for hours at a time.

### Advertisements

The American Psychological Association, an organization that represents psychologists in the United States, explains to us where children spend most of their time. "Today's children spend more time

(44.5 hours per week) in front of computer, television, and games screens than any other activity in their lives except sleep." The

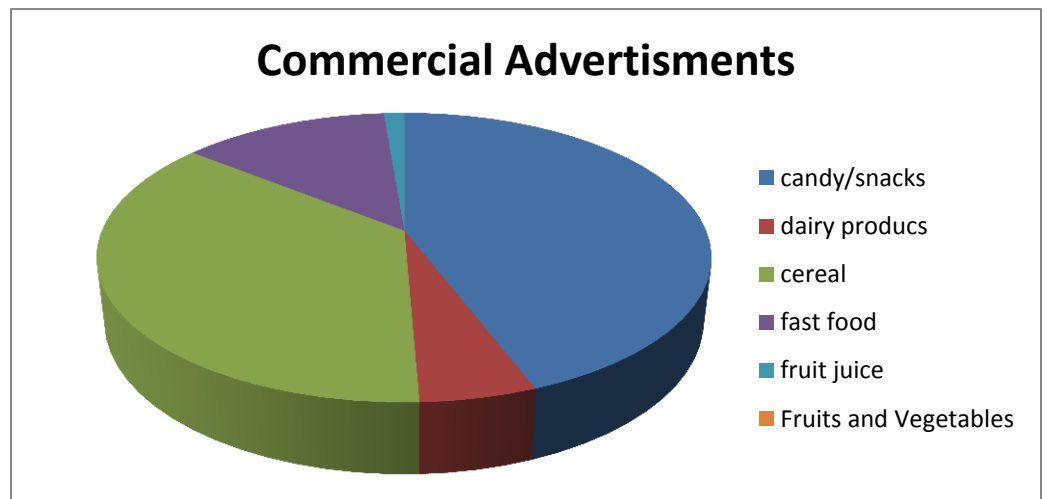


Figure 2 what companies are advertising the most

American Psychological Association thinks that commercials for fast food are very much linked to childhood obesity because of the fact that children spend most of their time on electronics. Children are on the televisions and computers the most to see these ads; businesses know it so they target ads straight to kid's interests. The American Psychological Association also found "in very young children, research has found that for every one hour increase in TV viewing per day, there are higher intakes of sugar-sweetened beverages, fast food, red and processed meat, and overall calories." This is because those ads link right to the sweets and unhealthy food. In Figure 2 it shows the percent of what companies are advertising the most of (American).

On the opposite side there are statistics that show obesity rates have gone up in the past twenty years. But their statistics show that obesity rates have increased in all age's not just children, and in all country's not just America so advertisement couldn't play a role in obesity. Gary Becker, a Nobel prize-winning economist and professor at the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business, agrees that advertisement does work to get people into the stores, but does not cause obesity directly. "There is no doubt that McDonald's and other companies tend to increase their revenues when they raise advertising budgets- otherwise, companies would not be spending as much on advertising." (Becker). Becker goes on to say

Virtually all the studies available to them examine the effects on children's weight of greater or lesser exposure to television. The problem with these studies is that they cannot separate the effect on weight of greater exposure to advertising through watching more television from the effect on the propensity to gain weight from other activities correlated with watching TV, such as eating popcorn and other snacks while watching.



What Becker is saying is that although advertisement does seem to help it is not necessarily linked to childhood obesity. There are other factors involved like snacks, exercise and if their parents cave into getting fast food.

## II. Food

### School Lunches

First Lady Michelle Obama has made her mark by advocating for healthier school lunches. Many schools have adapted this to improve school lunches while other schools are still serving high calorie foods. Obama wants to decrease the intake of sodium foods and increase foods with whole grain, and sides of fruits and vegetables. Michelle Obama's overall goal is to decrease the amount of calorie intake in school meals. This raises the question of children being full or not. According to CBS News students are not getting that full satisfactory feeling from school lunches so they go somewhere else to get it. The only things available to students then, are vending machines, fast food, or to eat once they get home. If students eat these other foods to get the full feeling, is it healthier than just sticking with original school lunches? This is the debate that is going around against Michelle Obama. Where is the line of what is right and wrong? This is a topic where everyone should know themselves and know what best suits themselves ("School").

### Unhealthy

Unhealthy foods and eating too much of it can really influence obesity. This includes snacks, fast food, greasy, most salty, and sugary foods. It is okay to eat these foods just as long as a person proportions the sizes and includes exercises in their life.

### **III. Exercise**

#### **Gym class**

Many schools in the United States are having trouble deciding what to do about gym classes because some believe more gym time needs to be incorporated while others believe we should stick to the basic curriculum. To graduate from high school seniors only need one credit of physical education. People are wondering if it needs to be more than one credit. Rod Dueck, an Assistant Vice Principal and part time gym teacher says, “We had to do something. They go home and sit on the couch and play Xbox and snack on chips. It’s an epidemic.” Dueck says this about their middle school; they have made physical education a daily schedule that has one period of gym for each of their 600 students. To do this they have four gym classes going on at the same time. The Wilson middle school is not the only school that is changing their policies. Many schools in the United States have been trying new ways to accommodate more gym time into daily school schedules (Sokoloff).

According to Dean, there are many conflicting topics that make gym class a controversial issue. First off people have the choice to do what they want with their own bodies. If they don’t want to exercise for whatever reason they should not be forced to. He argues some of those reasons may be because they are self-conscious, and don’t want to be sweaty all through the school day. Gym class can bring physical humiliation to kids who already have enough self-

conscious problems as it is. He also believes physical humiliation can do a lot of emotional damage to a person. Also in gym class a lot of injuries can occur. Some students are too competitive in sports and become too physically aggressive with others. The injury that can come to a person can last with them way after they get out of school.

Another reason to be against gym class is how much it costs. Gym is a whole extra department the school has to fund. They have to pay for extra teachers, coaches, and equipment. Also while building the schools they have to have a lot of extra space for fields which can become very expensive to purchase in rural areas. Schools also have to pay for the up keep of the land once they get it, and have to pay someone to take care of the land (Deane).

## **Laziness**

Like mentioned earlier sedentary lifestyles play a huge role in obesity in today's society. Some people are just too lazy to get up of the couch, chair, or bed and go move. Time can also be a factor. With busier lives it might be hard to find the time to go the gym and exercise. Also after a hard day at work it might be hard to get that motivation to go work out, it just seems easier to sit down and relax.

## **Make Your Choice**

There are no real controversial topics of people being for obesity, but there are a lot of factors that may or may not affect obesity. These factors are the controversial issues. People can't deny obesity is around us. Most everyone is affected by it either they are obese or know someone who is. There are many different opinions as to what causes obesity. This report only skims a few of these factors. A person needs to decide on their own what might cause obesity for them and how to handle it. Or maybe you're the healthy one, if so keep at it! It will be interesting to see how childhood obesity will play out in the future. We can only wait and see

what research will come from obesity and any new facts that might arise to help our understanding.

### Works Cited

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### **Images:**

Figure 1: Google Images.

Figure 2: Information taken from: American Psychological Association. "Fast Food Advertising is Linked to Rising Childhood and Teen Obesity." 2012. *Opposing Viewpoints*. Web. 9 Feb. 2012.

Figure 3: “School Lunches to get Healthy Revamp.” *CBS News Health Watch*. CBS News Health Watch, 25 Jan. 2012. Web. 9 Feb. 2012.