

Natural health: Obesity – a gateway to many diseases

Contributed by Dr. Steven West, ND
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According to the Centers for Disease Control, two-thirds of American adults are overweight, and one-third of us are obese.

Some studies claim the obesity rate to be much higher, more like 60 to 65 percent. Obesity is defined as 20 percent over the ideal body weight.

Studies claim we are the fattest country on earth! If you've traveled overseas to Europe and Asia you would probably concur. Asians, Europeans, Africans and Latin Americans definitely seem to be more slender than the average American.

Studies also point out that Americans have some of the world's highest rates of cancer, diabetes and heart disease. And yet many Americans, and certainly our "health care" industry, brag that we have the finest and most advanced medical care system in the world.

The problem is at once simple and complex. Any dietitian, nutritionist or naturopath like me would suggest that, for one thing, we simply eat less and exercise more. We've all heard that we need to eat far fewer simple and far more complex carbohydrates.

Another mantra is increasingly becoming, "Eat more organically grown foods (clean and more nutrient-rich) and less processed food." That's the "simple" part.

The hard parts are that we've grown up as an addictive society. The vast majority of us grew up eating foods laden with pesticides and grown in nutritionally poor or bankrupt agri-soils. Relatively inexpensive frozen and canned foods that typically contain sugars, and a host of additives, are not only our choice and for the most part what's readily available to us, but due to the sugars (including high fructose corn syrup) these food have become our addiction.

There are six tastes: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent. Each taste has both a physiological and emotional response. Sweet taste is the most emotionally nurturing of all the tastes. Sweet taste is the taste of "I feel secure now." It occurs, to some extent, in all grains, fruits and vegetables. It is the main taste in meats.

We need sugars to turn into glycogen to feed our 100 trillion cells. What we don't need is refined, concentrated and processed sugars like cane and high fructose sugars. These sugars spike insulin levels and ultimately create enormous health problems. These sugars, more than anything else, create obesity. They're almost ubiquitous in our supermarket food supply. And we've become addicted to them.

These refined sugars, along with excessive free-radical and homocystiene damage, create an almost unbridled internal inflammation. Studies all over the world are now in agreement that all of our deadly diseases are at least co-created by chronic subclinical inflammation. It's not inflammation that we most often don't feel, nor have any symptom of, and yet inflammation is a natural response in the body.

The immune system creates an inflammation whenever we suffer a cut or abrasion. It's a natural part of the healing response. But internal inflammation often goes unchecked and out of control due, in part, to a cascade of events from consuming excessive amounts of refined sugars. Also, its internal scaring and ensuing inflammation in our veins and arteries that demand a build up of excessive cholesterol that acts as an anti-inflammatory agent.

Finally, it doesn't take a well-financed scientific study to conclude that Lake County has a very high rate of obesity. Something must be done to avert further landslides of suffering from an information vacuum on the causes and prevention of the obesity epidemic in Lake County.

As long as local residents purchase foods that contribute to the problem, the supermarkets and mom and pop stores will continue to carry sugar-laden foods. Demand creates supply. Informed Lake County residents will eventually make more intelligent food choices. Life is not so much a tragedy of nutrition – life is a tragedy of information.

Steven West, ND is a Kelseyville- based naturopath and nutritionist. He graduated from the Institute for Natural Health Studies and has been in practice in California for 18 years.

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