



'SUPERSIZE ME' AND THE REST OF THIS FAST-FOOD NATION

Many thought *Supersize Me* was a funny rendition of what eating at McDonald's three times a day could do to a relatively normal body. Director Morgan Spurlock made the movie after hearing two young women who claimed eating at McDonald's made them obese. Spurlock, eating at McDonald's for every meal, allegedly gained twenty-five pounds during a six-week period.

While the Spurlock example is interesting, it is based in the work of *Atlantic* journalist Eric Schlosser, who chronicled the parallel rise of obesity in America with the growth of the fast-food industry. He discusses the ethics of that industry in his book *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Diet*, and concludes that one of the reasons Americans are getting fatter is fast food.

According to several public health organizations, obesity in America is increasing dramatically. This affects our health care facilities. Larger doorways and chairs are needed to accommodate larger patients, and bed hoists need to be included to lift and weigh these patients. Many in the health care industry consider obesity as the next health crisis.

So, what are the factors? Bigger portions, as Schlosser has chronicled.

Some people eat more calories than their bodies need. Another is lack of exercise. As the website Public Health notes, "inactivity is the new normal." While many have less time for exercise, "others are not motivated to do more beyond sitting behind a desk each day." The same organization states that fewer than twenty percent of jobs require a moderate amount of physical activity. Compare that to fifty percent requiring moderate activity in 1960.

Schlosser, in an op-ed to *The Washington Post*, noted he has been called both a foodie and an elitist based on his stand regarding the fast-food industry. "During the past forty years, our food system has changed more than in the previous 40,000 years. Genetically modified corn and soybeans, cloned animals, McNuggets" did not exist in 1970, he writes. He also notes that "The concentrated economic power now prevalent in U.S. agriculture didn't exist, either. For example, in 1970 the four largest meatpacking companies slaughtered about 21 percent of America's cattle; today the four largest companies slaughter about 85 percent."

The food industry rarely debates its critics. Instead, it sues. A couple of examples Schlosser provides are the complaint McDonald's made against London; Greenpeace, a lawsuit that spanned fifteen years; and the six-year Texas Cattlemen's suit against Oprah Winfrey for suggesting that mad cow disease could have entered the U.S. These powerful organizations wield a big stick.

So, what can we do to keep our bodies healthy? As the doctor says, eat good nourishing meals a few times a day, stay hydrated with water, take your vitamins/supplements, exercise, and eat that apple a day. All physicians emphasize the importance of exercise. If stricken with a life-altering complication, being in good shape will help recovery.

For more information:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-being-a-foodie-isnt-elitist/2011/04/27/AFeWsnFF_story.html?utm_term=.6e73dc04cf4e

<https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/explore-healing-practices/food-medicine/how-does-food-impact-health>

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