

60 Percent of Americans Will Be Obese by 2030



In the United States, 42.5 percent of adults 20 and over are obese, while another 31.1 percent are overweight.(1) While these statistics are already alarming, the American Obesity Association suggests that by 2025, 50 percent of Americans may be obese—and this will jump to 60 percent by 2030.(2)

What's behind this ongoing rise in Americans' weight is the burning question—one with a complex answer. Everything from endocrine-disrupting chemicals, known as "obesogens," in the environment(3), to chronic stress(4), and lack of sleep(5) affect fat deposition and weight gain in the human body.

However, the consumption of [ultra-processed or hyper-processed foods](#), which make up 57.9 percent of the average American's caloric intake,(6) is an important culprit. The link between processed foods and [obesity](#) has taken on new meaning during the pandemic, as even mild obesity may raise the risk of COVID-19.

In fact, COVID-19 patients with mild obesity had a 2.5 times greater risk of respiratory failure and a five times greater risk of being admitted to an ICU compared to non-obese patients, according to researchers from the Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna in Italy.(7) As such, calls have been made to tackle the pandemic by targeting junk food.

Why Processed Foods Are a Key Obesity Culprit

Ultra-processed foods include items such as breakfast cereals, pizza, chicken nuggets, soda, chips, salty/sweet/savory snacks, packaged baked goods, microwaveable frozen meals, and instant soups and sauces. They're high in sugar, and a [high-sugar diet](#) will take a toll on your [health](#) by packing on unwanted pounds at a remarkably rapid rate.

As noted in the BBC program "[The Truth About Sugar](#)," drinking three cups of tea or coffee per day with two teaspoons of sugar added to each cup can result in a 9.9-pound weight gain (4.5 kilos) in a single year, provided you don't increase your physical activity to burn off the extra calories.

When you consider that most people consume 5 or 6 times more added sugar than that each day, it's easy to see how obesity has become more the norm than the exception. Yet, sugar is only one problem with processed foods. Another, which may be an even worse

offender than sugar, is industrially processed seed oils, often referred to as "vegetable oils."

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Nine years of research and investigation have led ophthalmologist Dr. Chris Knobbe to conclude that chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, [age-related macular degeneration](#), heart disease, and cancer are being driven by nutrient deficiencies and toxicity caused by processed foods.

The root of the problem lies in mitochondrial dysfunction, which is caused by the excessive consumption of a Westernized [diet](#), including toxic industrially processed seed oils, refined flour, refined added sugars, and trans fats.

In a presentation at the ALLDOCS 2020 Annual Meeting, Knobbe cited data that found the obesity rate in the 19th century was 1.2 percent. By 1960, it had already risen to 13 percent—an 11-fold increase. It has continued to climb steadily to this day.

"Obesity is on target to be 50 percent of adults obese in the United States by 2030, half obese," Knobbe said. "So the increase looks something like ... a 33-fold increase already in 115 years." (8)

Knobbe said the rise in obesity tracks with unprecedented changes in the western diet.

Long-Term Consumption of Seed Oils Sets Off Obesity Cascade

When you consume an abundance of ultra-processed foods, it's not

only a matter of taking in empty calories or that eating too many calories can cause weight gain. Eating these foods actually triggers a catastrophic cascade of health declines rooted in mitochondrial dysfunction and insulin resistance.

Seed oils are a significant factor. At the root of the harmful biochemical reactions triggered by seed oils is linoleic acid. Linoleic acid accounts for about 80 percent of the fatty acid composition of vegetable oils. Omega-6 fats must be balanced with omega-3 fats in order not to be harmful, but this isn't the case for most Americans.

To make matters even worse, most of the omega-6 people eat has been damaged and oxidized through processing. Knobbe warns that excess omega-6 induces nutrient deficiencies and causes a catastrophic lipid peroxidation cascade. This leads to electron transport chain failure which causes mitochondrial failure and dysfunction.(9)

Mitochondria are the powerhouses of your cells and provide most of the chemical energy needed for your cell's biochemical reactions. When they malfunction, they can create reactive oxygen species, warns Dr. Knobbe. These substances are highly reactive chemical molecules, also called free radicals, that wreak havoc in your body.

These free radicals then feed back into peroxidation cascades, which is when those free radicals "steal" electrons from the lipids in [cell membranes](#) and start a chain reaction that damages the cell. Lipids are the main constituents of your cells.

"So, you're filling up your fat cells and your mitochondrial membranes with omega-6, and these are going to peroxidize because of the fact

that they are polyunsaturated," says Dr. Knobbe.

"All right, the next thing that happens is insulin resistance, which leads to metabolic syndrome, Type 2 diabetes, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. When the mitochondria fail, you get reduced fatty acid and beta oxidation, meaning you can't burn these fats properly for fuel."

If you can't burn fats for fuel, you have to depend on carbohydrates solely. That leaves you feeling tired and gaining weight, warns Dr. Knobbe.

"This is a powerful mechanism for obesity," he says.

Refined Sugars and Grains Are Also Driving Obesity

In his most recent book, "[The Case for Keto: Rethinking Weight Control and the Science and Practice of Low-Carb/High-Fat Eating](#)," journalist Gary Taubes explains how carbs and fats affect your body, and why replacing unhealthy carbs with healthy fats is so important if you're trying to control your weight or blood sugar.

In our 2021 interview, he also said the obesity epidemic can be [linked back to a Western diet](#) rich in refined sugars and refined grains.

Whenever sugar and white flour are added to a population's diet, regardless of what their baseline disease rate is, you eventually end up with an epidemic of obesity and diabetes.

The good thing about cutting ultra-processed foods from your diet is that doing so eliminates not only excessive amounts of refined sugars and grains, but also the omega-6 linoleic acid that's abundant in seed oils.

Nearly every fast food restaurant is also guilty of using high levels of these toxic fats, along with high amounts of refined sugar and grains. This is why it is so important to prepare as much of your food as you can in your home so you can know what you are eating.

Officials Advise Fighting COVID-19 by Targeting Junk Food

Some of the damages caused by processed foods have gone mainstream, as it's become clear that [obesity plays a role in COVID-19 deaths](#). London-based cardiologist Dr. Aseem Malhotra is among those warning that poor diet can increase your risk of dying from COVID-19 via its role in obesity and related conditions.

He wrote on Twitter, "The government and Public Health England are ignorant and grossly negligent for not telling the public they need to change their diet now." (10)

He told BBC that ultra-processed foods make up more than half of the calories consumed by the British, and if you suffer from obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure—all of which are linked to poor diet—your risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases 10-fold. In a paper published in the Journal of Virology agreed, researchers wrote:(11)

"Over the years, humans have adopted sedentary lifestyles and dietary patterns have shifted to excessive food consumption and poor nutrition."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson also believes that his weight made his COVID-19 infection more severe, and announced plans to implement bans on junk food ads online.(12,13) More than a dozen states in

Mexico have also decided to combat the pandemic by [banning the sale of junk food](#) to minors.(14)

In an editorial published in the BMJ,(15) three researchers also cited the role of the food industry in driving up rates of obesity and ultimately causing more COVID-19 deaths:

"It is now clear that the food industry shares the blame not only for the obesity pandemic but also for the severity of COVID-19 disease and its devastating consequences."

"During the COVID-19 pandemic an increase in food poverty, disruptions to supply chains, and panic buying may have limited access to fresh foods, thus tilting the balance towards a greater consumption of highly processed foods and those with long shelf lives ..."

"Moreover, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic the food industry has launched campaigns and corporate social responsibility initiatives, often with thinly veiled tactics using the outbreak as a marketing opportunity (for example, by offering half a million "smiles" in the form of doughnuts to NHS staff)."(16)

Top Steps to Lose Weight

If you're overweight or obese, taking steps to optimize your weight will have far-reaching benefits on your physical and mental health.

This starts with what you eat, and I recommend adopting a [cyclical ketogenic diet](#), which involves radically limiting carbs (replacing them with healthy fats and moderate amounts of protein) until you're close to or at your ideal weight, ultimately allowing your body to burn fat—not carbohydrates—as its primary fuel.

This includes avoiding all ultra-processed foods and also limiting added sugars to a maximum of 25 grams per day (15 grams a day if you're insulin resistant or diabetic). Regular exercise along with increased physical movement during your waking hours is also important, as are getting sufficient sleep and tending to your emotional health.

Taken together, by addressing the emotional side of eating and swapping out ultra-processed foods for whole foods, while staying active as much as possible, you'll not only naturally lose weight but also propel your overall health in a positive direction.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercola.com. An osteopathic physician, best-selling author, and recipient of multiple awards in the field of natural health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health. This article was originally published on [Mercola.com](https://www.mercola.com)

- 1 [U.S. CDC, Obesity and Overweight](#)
- 2 [American Obesity Association January 12, 2021](#)
- 3 [Curr Obes Rep. 2017 Mar;6\(1\):18-27. doi: 10.1007/s13679-017-0240-4](#)
- 4 [Annu Rev Psychol. 2019 Jan 4;70:703-718](#)
- 5 [Sleep Health. 2017 Oct;3\(5\):383-388. doi: 10.1016/j.sleh.2017.07.013. Epub 2017 Aug 15](#)
- 6 [BMJ Open Volume 6, Issue 3](#)
- 7 [Eur J Endocrinol. 2020 Jul 1;EJE-20-0541.R2. doi: 10.1530/EJE-20-0541](#)
- 8, 9 [ALLDOCS Annual Meeting 2020](#)
- 10 [Twitter, Dr Aseem Malhotra](#)
- 11 [Journal of Virology July 13, 2020](#)

- 12 [The Independent July 23, 2020](#)
- 13 [The Guardian November 10, 2020](#)
- 14 [NPR September 14, 2020](#)
- 15, 16 [BMJ 2020;369:m2237 doi: 10.1136/bmj.m2237](#)