

HEALTH MATTERS

Food Factors Most in Weight Gain

Trumps physical activity effects

(AP) -- The major reason for the obesity epidemic that has gripped the United States in the past three decades is increased food intake, not reduced physical activity, according to a new study.

The study is the first to quantify the relative contributions of food and exercise habits to the growing number of Americans with bulging waistlines.

"In the U.S., over the last 30 years, it seems that the food side of the equation has changed much more than the physical activity side," Professor Boyd A. Swinburn, director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

Weight gain in the American population seems to be virtually all due to the consumption of more calories, with declines in physical activity playing only a minor role, Swinburn explained.

"We absolutely need to continue to promote increased physical activity and a healthy diet because they are both obviously beneficial factors in terms of obesity," he emphasized. "But when it comes to placing priorities, I think it needs to be on reducing energy



Over-eating, not a lack of exercise, is to blame for the American obesity epidemic, a new study claimed Friday.

intake." In the study, Swinburn and his colleagues calculated how much adults need to eat in order to maintain a stable weight and how much children need to eat in order to maintain a normal growth curve.

They then figured out how much Americans were actually eating, using national food supply data from the 1970s and the early 2000s. This information

allowed them to predict how much weight Americans would be expected to gain over the 30-year study period if food intake were the only influence.

Next, the investigators determined the actual weight gained over the study period using data from a nationally representative survey that recorded the weight of Americans in the 1970s and early 2000s.

In children, according to

Swinburn and colleagues, the predicted and actual weight increase matched exactly, which indicates that the increases in energy intake alone over the 30 years studied could explain the added pounds, they say.

In adults, the data predicted that they would be 24 pounds heavier, but in fact they were 19 pounds heavier. This finding, Swinburn noted, "suggests that excess food intake still explains the weight gain, but that there may have been increases in physical activity over the 30 years that have blunted what would otherwise have been a higher weight gain."

"To return to the average weights of the 1970s, we would need to reverse the increased food intake of about 350 calories a day for children (about one can of fizzy drink and a small portion of French fries) and 500 calories a day for adults (about one large hamburger)," Swinburn noted.

"Alternatively, we could achieve similar results by increasing physical activity by about 150 minutes a day of extra walking for children and 110 minutes for adults, but realistically, although a combination of both is needed, the focus would have to be on reducing calorie intake," he added.

Genes Pinpoint Human Origins

(AP) -- Africans have more genetic variation than anyone else on Earth, according to a new study that helps narrow the location where humans

first evolved, probably near the South Africa-Namibia border.

The largest study of African genetics ever undertaken also found that nearly three-fourths of African-Americans trace their ancestry to West Africa.

"Given the fact that modern humans arose in Africa, they have had time to accumulate dramatic changes" in

their genes, explained lead researcher Sarah Tishkoff, a geneticist at the University of Pennsylvania.

"The human genome describes the complexity of our species," added Muntaser Ibrahim of the department of molecular biology at the University of Khartoum, Sudan. "Now we have spectacular insight into the history of the African population ... the oldest history of mankind."

"Everybody's history is part of African history because everybody came out of Africa," Ibrahim said.

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Vigilance against Flu Virus Urged

Risks continue, resurgence expected this fall

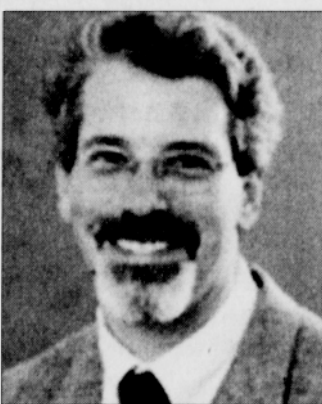
Complacency is the most dangerous enemy as the H1N1 swine flu virus continues to spread in Oregon and elsewhere, the head of the Oregon Public Health Division warns.

"This first wave is not yet over, and I fully expect to see the statewide numbers grow through the rest of this flu season and then again in the fall flu season, said Dr. Mel Kohn.

"In order to protect themselves and others, people should keep up the common sense practices of frequent and thorough handwashing and other precautions," Kohn said.

While strongly cautioning that this spring's outbreak of the H1N1 swine flu is still active, Kohn and his team of public health authorities are planning for a resurgence of this flu strain as well as seasonal influenza viruses in the fall.

"We are relieved that the health effects caused by the H1N1 swine flu virus are turning out to be similar to the common annual influenza viruses we are accustomed to prevent-



Dr. Mel Kohn

ing and treating," Kohn said. "Looking forward, however, we anticipate a reappearance of this strain in the fall, particularly because we have no natural immunity and a vaccine may not yet be available."

The H1N1 swine flu is spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by infected people. People infected with the H1N1 swine flu virus may not be symptomatic one to four days following exposure.

The Oregon Public Health Division advises that when it comes to protecting yourself,

your family and your clients, common sense precautions go a long way in avoiding infection.

Use the normal safeguards you would to avoid any respiratory illness:

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the garbage after you use it.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to avoid spreading germs.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If you are ill, stay home to avoid spreading your illness to others.

H1N1 swine influenza symptoms are similar to those for seasonal flu and may include fever greater than 100 degrees F; sore throat; cough; stuffy nose; chills; headache or body aches; fatigue; and in some cases diarrhea and vomiting.

HEALTHWATCH

Red Cross Continuing Education -- The Oregon Trail Chapter Red Cross now offers credits to help professionals maintain licensing or certification. For a cumulative list, visit pdxinfo.net.

Cancer Resource Center -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Chronic Pain Support Group -- meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

Maternity Water Workout -- Helping new moms regain muscle tone, strength, and flexibility, all in the support and freedom of the water. Call 503-256-4000 for more information.

Cholesterol Profiles -- Calls help you keep an eye on your cholesterol and other indicators of heart health; educational material provided. For more information, call 503-261-6611.

Cardiac-Rehab Exercises -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For information, call 503-251-6260.

Senior Aerobics -- A low-impact workout geared specifically toward seniors. Call 503-449-0783 for current schedule.

Osteoporosis Screening -- An ultrasound bone density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

Leg Alert Screening -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

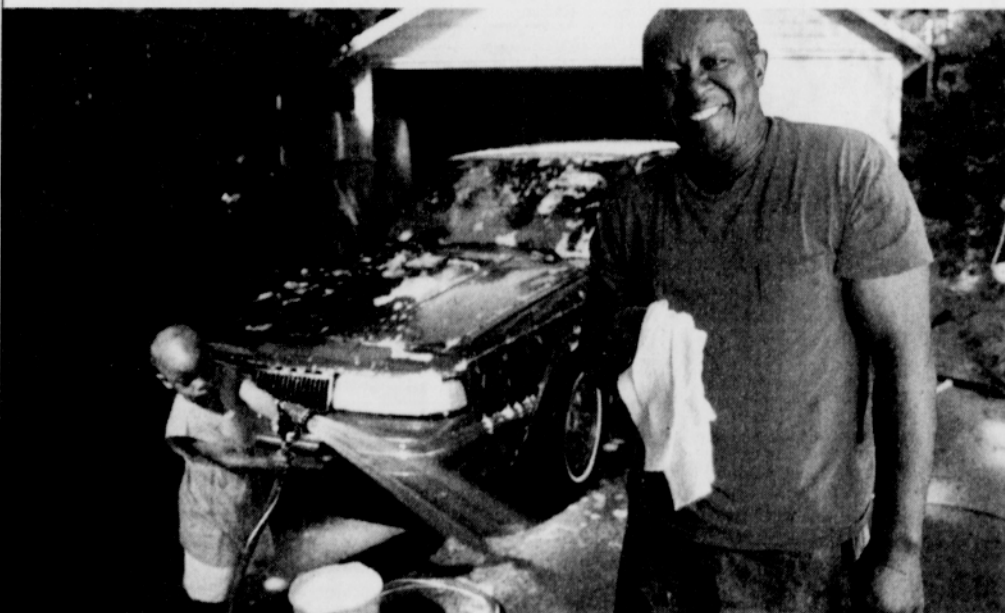
Smoke-Free Support Group -- meets Mondays, 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. For information, call 503-256-4000.

Managing Chronic Hepatitis C -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. The informative session is led by a registered nurse to help you manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctor referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

Heart Talk Support Group Meets -- on the second Monday of each month; from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

Lead Poisoning Prevention -- Learn how to protect your family from lead poisoning. Ideal for folks in live in older homes with children or pregnant women. Qualified participants receive a free kit of safety and testing supplies. Call 503-284-6827.

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