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Obesity – Who’s fault? the relationship between Restaurants and Obesity by [Toby](#)
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America – The Land of the free and also.....the Land of the Fat! The stark reality is that the USA is possibly the fattest country in the world!

More than one-third of U.S. adults (35.7%) are obese. Approximately 17% (or 12.5 million) of children and adolescents aged 2–19 years are obese.

Over the past thirty years, the prevalence of obesity and obesity-related diseases in the U.S. has risen sharply. Since the early 1970s, the share of children age 6 to 19 classified as overweight has more than tripled, from 5 percent to 17 percent, while the share of adults classified as overweight or obese rose from one-half to two-thirds of the population. Over this same period, the number of fast food restaurants more than doubled. Exposures such as "Supersize Me" and "Fast Food Nation" along with reports in the popular press have frequently suggested that fast food is at least partly to blame for the U.S.'s rising obesity rates.

Despite the popularity of this view, it has been difficult to empirically establish a definitive link between fast food and obesity. The simple fact that fast food restaurants and obesity have both increased over time is insufficient proof of this connection, as are studies that rely on differences in fast food consumption across individuals, since people who eat more fast food may be prone to other behaviors that affect obesity.

Of course, over the recent years the US media has gone to great lengths to share the risks of obesity and the new concept of wellness, but while there's a better awareness of the side effects of eating, there is little to show in the way of statistical improvements.

So what's the problem?

Interestingly, while Americans point the finger at the fast food restaurants, it's probably not so much the fast food restaurants that are at fault but the consumers themselves and, believe it or not, technological advancement. Remember - a free economy is set up where supply meets demand not the other way round, and there is no economy as free as the USA!

However, lifestyle is also to blame. Greater economic demands on families have generated enormous lifestyle challenges for individuals and families. America's consumer driven economy is largely to blame. The economic realities of running a home in the US usually require that the husband and wife work in full time jobs. Single parent home generally have broad pressures as well, so the US consumer lifestyle requires a fine balance between work and family time. This balancing act is what created an entirely new food culture – fast, affordable and tasty – wrapped up in one single word: "Convenient". Since the end of WW2, Americans have migrated towards anything that shaves time from their busy lives.

Bear in mind that the US restaurant industry captures 49 percent of Americans' food dollar, according to the National Restaurant Association. So these restaurant groups have a big influence on what we eat.

Additionally, the government is taking an interest, and there are a number of government sponsored proposals in place which are intended to help consumers make up their minds; among the most controversial of the recommendations: Communities could consider a tax on sugary sodas and

offering price breaks for healthier beverage choices.

However, the big change, as with many things these days has been driven by the internet. The internet is a restaurant's best friend and its worst nemesis. Love it or hate it, the internet has been the largest platform to channel concepts such as Wellness, healthy eating, and the health implications of fast food and pre-packed / processed products.

The information age, which has accelerated the consumers understanding of good food and bad food, has driven two major changes:

- 1) Consumer awareness has forced changes in demand – McDonalds now serves salads!!
- 2) Underground movements have become mainstream – for example the 'Farm to Table' movement has created its own websites and associated restaurants [which are becoming chains]. Any well-known chef in the US is promoting sustainability and locally farmed produce, meats and fish, as well.

Over the past decade, obesity rates stayed about the same in women, while men experienced a small rise. That increase occurred mostly in higher-income men, for reasons researchers couldn't explain.

About 17 percent of the nation's children and teens were obese in 2009 and 2010, the latest available data. That's about the same as at the beginning of the decade, although a closer look by the study shows continued small increases in boys, especially African-American boys.

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