

# Weight gain is a curse of the modern times

by Mark Pavilons

“Eating insects is good for the environment and balanced diets.” Kofi Annan

I don't know if I'd go that far, but there's a lot of truth in that statement.

Being a husky boy, I've always had to pay attention to my weight. Those who've gone through the roller coaster ride of diets over the years know it comes back faster and harder than it ever did to take it off.

I envy those with metabolisms like hyper-active jack rabbits. They simply burn calories just by standing there.

There are so many stressors in our lives, and weight shouldn't be the dominating force. Yet it is for so, so many. We're all conscious of it.

Most of us who have trouble with weight think it's just us. But listen folks, there's some important information to absorb. It's not just us ? the toxins and high levels of sugars, carbs and junk we're ingesting ? those are the real culprits.

A study published recently in the journal Obesity Research & Clinical Practice found that it's harder for adults today to maintain the same weight as those 20 to 30 years ago did, even at the same levels of food intake and exercise.

The authors examined the dietary data of 36,400 Americans between 1971 and 2008 and the physical activity data of 14,419 people between 1988 and 2006. They grouped the data sets together by the amount of food and activity, age, and body mass index (BMI).

They found a very surprising correlation: Any given person, in 2006, eating the same amount of calories, taking in the same quantities of macronutrients like protein and fat, and exercising the same amount as a person of the same age did in 1988 would have a BMI that was about 2.3 points higher. In other words, people today are roughly 10 per cent heavier than people were in the 1980s.

“Our study results suggest that if you are 25, you'd have to eat even less and exercise more than those older, to prevent gaining weight,” Jennifer Kuk, a professor of kinesiology and health science at Toronto's York University, said in a statement. “However, it also indicates there may be other specific changes contributing to the rise in obesity beyond just diet and exercise.”

Kuk offered three different factors that might be making harder for adults today to stay thin.

First, people are exposed to more chemicals that might be weight-gain inducing. Pesticides, flame retardants, and the substances in food packaging might all be altering our hormonal processes and tweaking the way our bodies put on and maintain weight.

Second, the use of prescription drugs has risen dramatically since the '70s and '80s. Antidepressants are now one of the most commonly prescribed drugs in North America, and many of them have been linked to weight gain.

The experts also believe the microbiomes (microorganisms living in or on the human body) of people might have somehow changed between the 1980s and now. It's well known that some types of gut bacteria make a person more prone to weight gain and obesity. Americans are eating more meat than they were a few decades ago, and many animal products are treated with hormones and antibiotics in order to promote growth. We also don't really know the long-term effects of artificial sweeteners.

Wow, it seems you just can't win.

I tend to drink a lot of diet pop, and my wife keeps telling me it will be my undoing. Go figure, we try to curb our sugar intake, only

to suffer a Splenda overdose. Well maybe my corpse will be well preserved!

So, we should consider that body weights of people today are impacted by factors beyond our control. We eat on the run, often late at night. We suffer more indigestion and reflux than ever before. Also, once you hit 40, it's harder and harder to retain that youthful, chiselled shape no matter what you do.

Let's take a look at exercise. Gym memberships can be quite expensive today, and things like elliptical trainers are well over \$1,000. These are out of reach for average income earners. And those very same citizens simply can't afford to eat right ? fruits, vegetables and the like are at their peak in terms of price. Eating healthy, and organic, costs a fortune.

I?wouldn't say we're in this huge, societal catch-22, but there are factors working against us.

We're continually bombarded by fast-food advertising, and while more and more places are offering healthy alternatives, the sales of caloric behemoths are still the poison of choice. Let's be honest, we don't go to McDonald's for a salad.

Our family has been on the keto lifestyle for a while, but we took a break around the Labour Day long weekend. We went off the rails, or down the slippery slope as I call it, but we're picking ourselves up, dusting off and getting back into the no-carb, no-sugar game.

It's not always easy, and choices are limited, but it does work. If you just read some labels, you'd be shocked at the amount of carbs and sugar in everyday foodstuffs. No wonder our society is ballooning.

I?believe a healthy weight is attainable with some changes and commitment.

I'd suggest that we try, but don't stress over the day-to-day results. Eat better, and enjoy life!