



HOW THE GOVERNMENT MADE YOU FAT

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Here's a riddle: How is it that ever since the government began telling us what to eat, we have gotten fatter and sicker?

In 1977, when the government first set dietary guidelines, the average American male weighed 170 pounds. He now weighs 197. It's not any better for women—145 to 170. And you don't need an academic study to know the same thing is happening to kids. Just look around.

The weight gain has real-life consequences: the percentage of Americans diagnosed with type 2 diabetes—a condition that can lead to severe medical issues—has risen from 2% in 1977 to over 9% in 2015. In hard numbers, that's five million people to over 30 million people.

How did this happen?

It all started innocently enough in the 1950s, when President Dwight Eisenhower had a heart attack while in office. Suddenly, the issue of heart health became a national obsession. Keep in mind this was an era when scientists had harnessed the power of the atom, unlocked the secrets of DNA, and cured once incurable diseases like polio. Surely, there *had* to be a scientific solution to heart disease.

There was. And a charismatic medical researcher from the University of Minnesota named Ancel Keyes had it. Cholesterol, Keyes claimed, was the villain of the heart disease story.

His now famous “seven countries study” determined conclusively—in *his* mind, at least—that people who consumed high amounts of fat—specifically, saturated fat—had higher cholesterol levels and thus, higher rates of heart attacks. Lower your fat intake, and you would lower heart disease risk.

The ever-confident Keyes spread the gospel. As an influential member of the American Heart Association, he was in a very strong position to do so. There was only one problem: Keyes's study was bad science. The sample size was so small, the data collection integrity so shoddy, and the life-style variables between the countries he studied so great, that his research had no scientific validity. In other words, he asserted a conclusion he couldn't prove.

When other scientists questioned Keyes's conclusions, they were invariably met with stern responses like: “people are dying while you're quibbling over data points.” And, “there are great benefits and no risks” to adopting this new way of eating.

In 1973, the American Heart Association set the dietary limit on saturated fat at 10%, and

in 1977, the US government followed suit. Where did the 10% value come from? It didn't come from any scientific data. It was merely a government committee's best guess. This was despite contrary evidence like the 1957 Western Electric Company employee study showing no difference in heart attacks in those who ate more or less saturated fat. A longer-term study of the same Western Electric subjects in 1981 reached the same conclusion. But again, no one wanted to hear it.

To make this all easier to understand and to spread the message to schools, "the food pyramid" was created. That's the chart you first saw in third or fourth grade with all the supposedly good foods at the bottom—meaning, "eat a lot of those," and the bad foods at the top—"eat those ones sparingly."

What our kids are fed in school, what our military troops are fed on bases, what sick people are fed in hospitals; what crops we plant and how we raise our cattle, are all predicated on this deceptive nutritional concept.

As Americans ate less saturated fat—margarine instead of butter, processed oils like corn oil instead of olive oil, low fat milk, low fat yogurt and so on— they also started to eat more "heart healthy" grains—exactly what the food pyramid, and the updated version called MyPlate, advise you to do. As the consumption of saturated fat decreased by almost 40%, the consumption of refined grains—carbohydrates that convert to sugar in the body—increased substantially. Total intake of calories also began to increase.

This happened, in no small part, because food companies took advantage of the low-fat craze. They lowered fat and increased sugar. Suddenly, supermarkets were full of supposedly healthy low fat, high sugar foods. It remains that way today. Foods that are high in sugar stimulate reward centers in the brain and leave us wanting more. Thus, the famous line about potato chips: "Betcha can't eat just one!"

The end result is a fatter population with greater and greater health issues—like type 2 diabetes, a problem that's getting worse, not better.

How do we get ourselves out of this spiral? There are many answers: for some, it's a low-carb, high fat diet; for others, it's a Mediterranean diet; for some, it's vegetarianism; for others, it might be something else.

You need to find the best solution for *you*. And that's really the point: we need to take responsibility for our own health.

If the food pyramid has taught us one thing, it's this:

Don't rely on the government to take care of you.

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