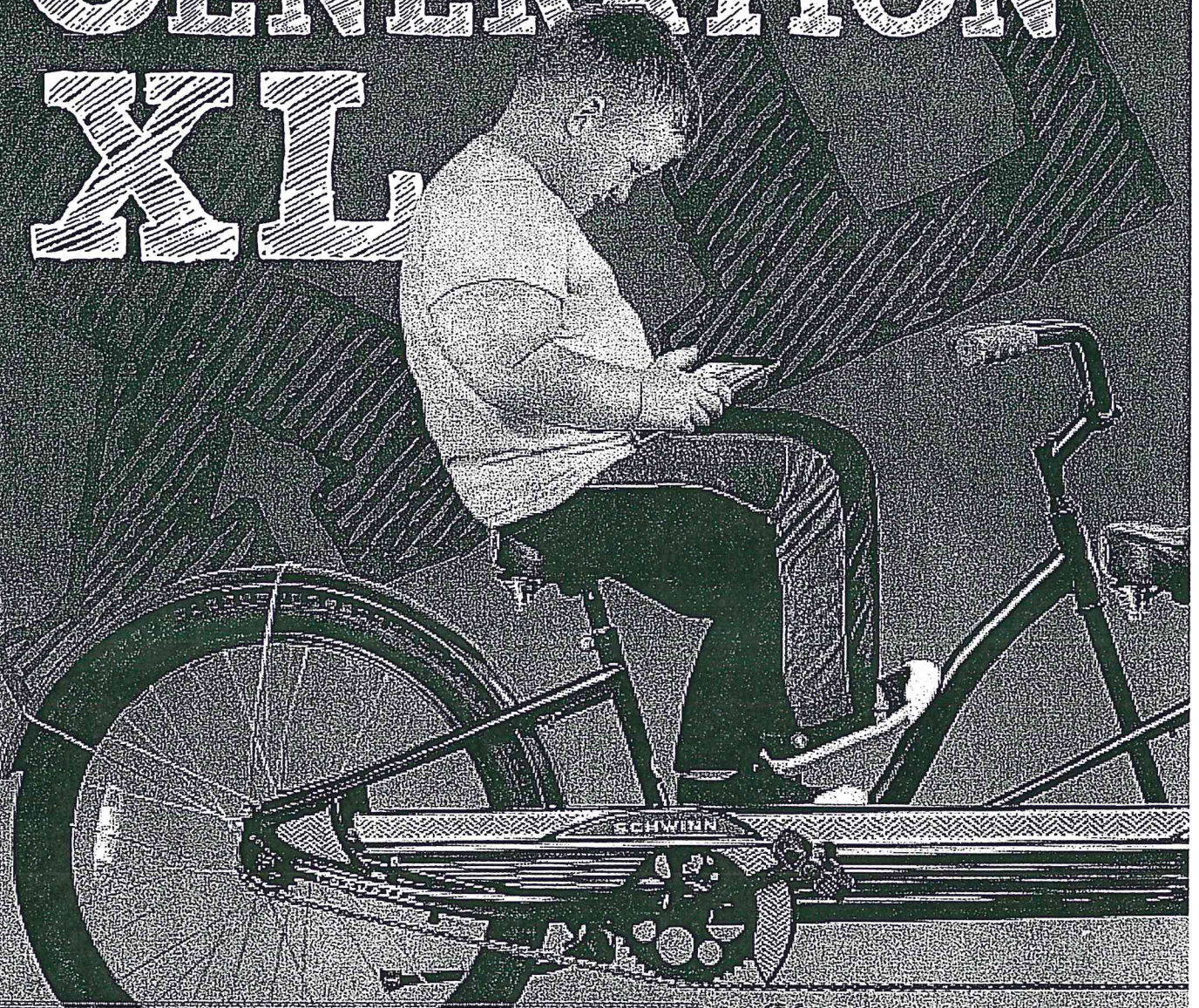


BY NANCY GOTTESMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAL HOREVAJ

GENERATION XI



What Is Obesity Anyway?

OBESITY for 2- to 19-year-olds is a BMI at or above the 95th percentile on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention growth charts.

OVERWEIGHT is a BMI at or above the 85th percentile and lower than the 95th percentile

Visit the CDC's Child and Teen BMI Calculator: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpabmi/>.

New **2012**



Is Your Kid Fit?

Visit parenting.com/big-kidfast to get the skinny (or not so skinny)

We're raising the **fattest generation of kids this country's ever known**—with heavy-duty health consequences. But it's not too late to gear up and fight for the health of your child.

Forty years ago we ate sugary cereal for breakfast, bologna on white bread for lunch, and "creme-filled" snack cakes after school. We had meatloaf with a dollop of overcooked veggies for dinner, washed down with an orange-flavored drink.

Fortunately, we know a whole lot more about kids' nutrition than our own moms and dads ever did. But if we're so darn smart, why have childhood-obesity rates tripled since the 1970s? Currently, one in every six U.S. children—from toddlers to teenagers—is obese (and 77 percent of them are destined to be fat adults, too). More kids than ever before are diagnosed with weight-related problems that used to pop up only in adults: sleep apnea, joint pain, heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes.

Pediatric-obesity experts say the problem is more complex than calories in vs. calories out. The real reasons for it stem from cultural and behavioral changes that have taken place since the '70s. The good news is, fixing what's wrong is easier than you'd think. Here's a look at what's weighing your kid down, and how to help him lighten up.

1972 *The*



Supersized Servings

The breakfast muffin you ate in elementary school was a crumb compared to today's. Blame it on the supersizing phenomenon of food man-

ufacturers and restaurants increasing their products' heft. This marketing strategy has been hugely successful—but it's also helping to make our kids huge. Studies have shown that when a bigger portion is served to a child age 2 or older, he'll often eat more, if not all.

Measure Up

Children 2-5 years old	dry cereal	1/2 cup
	cooked pasta	1/4-1/2 cup
Children 6-12 years old	dry cereal	3/4 cup
	cooked pasta	1/2 cup

A recent study in the *American Journal of Public Health* analyzed portion sizes of drinks, desserts, fries, pizza, and burgers from 1977 to 2006, and found a few jaw-dropping jumps. (For some examples from this report, and others, see "That Was Then, This Is Now," next page.) These no- to low-nutrient foods now make up about one-third of 2- to 12-year-olds' diets. "We may have eaten some junky foods when we were children, too, but the portions were so much smaller," explains Lara Field, R.D., a pediatric dietitian at the University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital and the founder of feedkids.com.

What YOU can do Cut premade foods into halves, thirds, or quarters. When you're serving food, keep portion-size guidelines in mind (see "Measure Up,"

below). And give children rules for serving themselves: "I tell kids to use their palm—not including fingers—to gauge portion sizes for chicken, beef, fish, and tofu," says Field. "For snacks, I say not to eat more than they can grab in one hand."

Another trick: Buy smaller dishware. Scientists at Cornell University proved that it can make us eat and drink less.

Snack Attack

When was the last time you heard someone say "Don't snack now, it'll spoil your dinner"? While we ate one snack daily in the '70s, modern kids eat three. And it's not all carrots and celery. A study from the University of North Carolina found that high-sugar and high-fat processed snacks (like cookies, chips, and crackers) account for 28 percent of 2- to 6-year-olds' diets and 35 percent of 7- to 12-year-olds'. "Forty or 50 years ago, kids snacked on strawberries," says David Ludwig, M.D., director of the New Balance Foundation Obesity Prevention Center at Children's Hospital Boston and a professor at the Harvard Medical School. "Now they eat fruit candy."

What YOU can do

Limit snacks to just one or two daily. Offer healthy choices, such as edamame, celery with peanut butter, a cheese stick, plain yogurt mixed with cut-up fruit, or even a bean soup like minestrone or lentil, suggests

Field. Kids don't need more than that if they're eating nutritious, filling meals (whole grains, protein, healthy fats, and vegetables).

Not-So-Sweet Nothings

One study, published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, investigated the major sources of added sugar in the diets of 2- to 18-year-olds. The culprits? Soda, vitamin water, and energy drinks (116 calories daily); fruit drinks (55 calories); and desserts such as cakes, cookies, granola bars, and candy (94 calories). For kids 2 to 8 years old, cold cereals were also a

major source. "The number of calories children are getting from sugar-sweetened beverages alone is alarming," says Jill Reedy, Ph.D., a nutritionist and researcher at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, MD.

What YOU can do Start by cutting down—or out—all those high-cal chugs. Limit the juice boxes, soda cans, and energy-drink bottles. Provide water when your child is thirsty and serve milk with meals. In Lara Field's pediatric dietary practice, sugary beverages are the first to go. "Some kids get half their daily calorie needs in juice and soda," she says.

My Big Fat Pregnancy

Expecting again? *What you do (or did) even before your child's birth can impact his weight and body-fat percentage throughout his lifetime.* More mothers are entering pregnancy obese, increasing the risk of gestational diabetes, which in turn raises the chance their children will be obese later.

What YOU can do *It may be too late to redo your pregnancy, but Matthew Gillman, M.D., director of the Obesity Prevention Program at Harvard Medical School, advises taking these steps with your next baby:*

1 Make sure she gets enough sleep. Dr. Gillman's research found that infants who slept fewer than 12 hours a day had twice the odds of being overweight at age 3 than infants who slept more. "Less sleep may change the hormones that regulate appetite and weight gain," he explains.

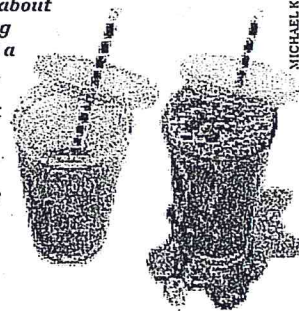
2 Nurse for as long as you comfortably can. An analysis in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* found that the risk of obesity drops 4 percent for each month of breastfeeding (up to 9 months). As you wean, talk to your doctor about transitioning your baby to a healthy diet.

3 Get your sitter on board with your baby-feeding rules. Dr. Gillman found that 0- to 6-month-olds cared for in a center, at someone else's home, or by a sitter in the child's own home were heavier when they reached 1 to 3 years old.

Cup of Soda

1980s Today

6.5 ounces, 85 calories
20 ounces, 250 calories



MICHAEL KRAUS: FOOD STYLING: EN GABRIELS FOR HALLEY RESOURCES; CLOTHING: THROUGHOUT; SHIRT: (AMERICAN PAPER NET); PANTS: (OLD NAVY); SHOES: (ZAPPOS.COM); PREVIOUS PAGES: SCHWINN; MIDD-CONVETTE; SOURCE FOR CEREAL AND PASTA SERVINGS: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; SOURCE FOR SODA SIZES: AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

"Cutting these alone can be enough to get a child back to a healthy weight." As for 100% fruit juice, yes, it has a few more nutrients. But it also has just as many calories as pop does, and offers no fiber. Always go with an apple over apple juice.

Screen Play

Exercise helps maintain weight and lowers the risk of problems like heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. But how can your school-age child find time to toss a ball around when she spends an average of seven and a half hours daily using computers, video games, TV, and cell phones? The vast majority of kids ages 6 months to 6 years old—83 percent—watch TV or videos for two hours every day.

And then there's the issue of the almost 4,000 kid-oriented food and

Burn, Baby, Burn

Weeding the garden	87 calories
Sweeping the garage	78 calories
Raking the lawn	83 calories
Bathing the dog	67 calories
Washing the car	60 calories

(Calories burned per 30 minutes by an 85-pound child)

beverage ads your child sees each year, 98 percent of which promote high-fat, high-sugar, or high-sodium kiddie fare. Ads can even have an instant effect: Children eat 45 percent more food when watching shows with food commercials.

What YOU can do Follow the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics: no TV for kids under 2 years and limit media time for older kids to one to two hours of quality programming daily. The AAP also recommends that children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. Stock up on jump ropes, Frisbees, kickballs, and other toys that encourage exercise. Another idea: chores. (Remember those?) Check out the chart above to see how many calories your kid could burn helping out.

Of course, your child would burn more calories playing soccer (386 calories) or basketball (309 calories) for an hour, but then you wouldn't have a shiny car or clean garage, huh? ☹

NANCY GOTTESMAN lives with her teenage son in Santa Monica, CA, and writes frequently about health and nutrition.

That Was THEN NOW

Food for Thought

Average serving of fries (1980s):
2.4 ounces, 210 calories

Movie popcorn tub (1980s):
5 cups, 270 calories

Number of snack-food calories
kids consumed (1977):
310 for 2- to 6-year-olds;
395 for 7- to 12-year-olds

Hard to Swallow

Amount of regular soda kids
drank daily (1977): 4 ounces

Amount of milk kids drank
daily (1977): 15 ounces

Food budgets spent on meals out-
side the house (1970): 26%

Number of food-service establish-
ments (1972): 491,000

Not-So-Prime Time

Kids' daily screen time (1999):
6 hours, 19 minutes

Total hours of kids'
shows on TV (1991-92):
772 hours, 27 minutes

Number of TV commer-
cials the average child saw
yearly (1970s): 20,000

It's a No-Go

Kids who walked
or biked to school
(1969): 48%

Weekly hours
kids spent par-
ticipating in outdoor
activities (1981):
5 hours, 44 minutes

Heavy Thoughts

What an average
10-year-old boy
weighed (1971):
75.3 pounds

Kids 6 to 11
who were obese
(1976): 6.5%

Food for Thought

Average serving of fries (today):
6.9 ounces, 610 calories

Movie popcorn tub (today):
11 cups, 630 calories

Number of snack-food calories
kids consumed (2006):
491 for 2- to 6-year-olds;
568 for 7- to 12-year-old

Hard to Swallow

Amount of regular soda kids
drank daily (2006): 9 ounces

Amount of milk kids drank
daily (2006): 9.5 ounces

Food budgets spent on meals out-
side the house (2008): 46%

Number of food-service estab-
lishments (today): 878,000

Not-So-Prime Time

Kids' daily screen time (today):
7 hours, 38 minutes

Total hours of kids' shows
on TV (this season): 39,986
hours, 41 minutes

Number of TV commercials
the average child sees yearly
(now): 40,000+

It's a No-Go

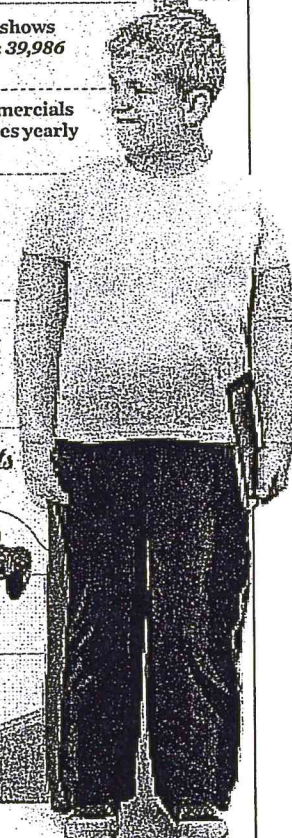
Kids who walk
or bike to school
(today): 13%

Weekly hours kids
spent participating
in outdoor activi-
ties (2003):
3 hours, 9 minutes

Heavy Thoughts

Average 10-year-
old boy's weight
(today): 88.3
pounds

Kids 6 to 11 who
were obese
(2010): 18%



SHUTTERSTOCK © CALORIE COUNTS: FITNESS PARTNERS ACTIVITY CALORIE COUNTER "THEN/NOW" FACTS: UNIV. OF NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE/USDA, OBESITY: KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION, NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION