

WHY IS AMERICA

SO FAT?

By: Rebecca Schwartz

As the bell rings, dozens of teens swarm from their various classrooms, and charge over to the popular lunch counter. What looks like an overwhelming line of people soon becomes shorter and shorter as the satisfied customers walk away chomping on hot, greasy strips of fried "something." Some popular foods chosen include french fries, potato chips, hamburgers, hot dogs and pizza.

During lunch hour, the munching teens discuss why Jimmy broke up with Liz, why Mrs. Muller is the greatest teacher, or what band is playing Saturday night. One thing is for sure; these kids are not thinking about how much they are endangering themselves.

Eating junk food puts these teens at risk for becoming overweight in addition to some very serious health problems. With all of the readily available junk food, it's no wonder there are so many unhealthy and obese people in this country.

According to "Nutrition Action," teenage health problems, such as obesity, doubled between 1980 and 1994. One in every four Americans is considered obese, states the "Mayo Clinic Health Oasis." In addition,

55 percent of Americans over the age of twenty are considered overweight or obese. Why is America so fat?

A surprising factor is found in what Americans drink. A two year study,

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conducted by "Nutrition Action," found those who drink more sweetened soft drinks, iced tea, and fruit drinks (like Kool-Aid, Hawaiian Punch) were most likely to become obese.

Besides drinking heavily sugared drinks, another component of the obesity problem is all of the "low-fat" foods available. According to Steven Landsberg, an economist for MSNBC, people are fooled by the label "low-fat." They feel they can eat or drink more with less guilt.

Barry Sears, author of *The Zone*, was quoted as saying, "We need to view food as a potential drug...as Americans are the fattest they have ever been." According to Dr. Koop, the former Surgeon General, obesity is



the second leading cause of preventable death in America. If we are not careful now, all of America will be obese.

So, before McDonalds gets the best of us, there are measures we can take in order to keep healthy and fit. Instead of snacking on caloric foods, such as chips and ice cream, we can try any number of fruits and vegetables. In addition, we should all exercise regularly. Not only does this burn up calories, it increases the potency of the nutrients that change body shape and the effectiveness of the natural appetite suppressants in food. Whether it's swimming laps, or shooting hoops, it is essential that we keep moving. Everyone is at risk of becoming overweight. Yet, we are lucky, because obesity is a curable problem, a problem that can be fixed with time, patience, and good sense ___ and a shut mouth.