

Everyday Signs that Obesity Rates Are Increasing

Many experts agree that obesity is one of the most pressing health problems facing the country. Over the last twenty years, obesity rates have *doubled* in adults and children and *tripled* in teens. Two-thirds of Americans are now overweight or obese.

Yet some food industry groups question whether obesity rates are increasing and instead, claim that the rising rates are due to a change in the definition for obesity (Body Mass Index). For anyone else who is skeptical, here are some other signs that obesity rates are going up.

- Because of safety concerns, the Federal Aviation Administration has instructed airlines to add ten pounds to approved passenger weights.¹
- When administering vaccines and drawing blood, doctors now need longer needles to penetrate thicker layers of fat on Americans' bodies.²
- Almost 25% of women in their 50's are too large to have their body fat measured with a traditional skinfold caliper, an instrument developed in the 1950's.³
- Liposuction is the most commonly performed cosmetic surgical procedure in the U.S., increasing 118% between 1997 and 2001.⁴
- Over the last decade, diabetes rates rose 60% in the U.S.⁵ (Over half of diabetes cases are due to overweight, poor diet and physical inactivity.⁶)
- Today's size 10 was sold as a women's size 14 in the 1940's.⁷
- The Gap, Limited Too and Target are selling plus-sized clothes for youth.⁸
- Plus-size boutique Lane Bryant is expected to increase its number of stores from 650 to 1,000 over five years. Catherine's Plus Sizes is projected to increase from 470 to 700 stores. The plus-size clothing market generates \$23 billion in sales a year, accounting for a quarter of women's clothing sales.⁹
- Nike changed the size scale for its women's fitness apparel. A small sports bra use to fit a woman with a 33-inch to 35-inch bust. Now it fits a 35- to 37-inch bust.¹⁰
- One of the reasons that the Boston Red Sox decided to rebuild the legendary Fenway Park was that the seats were too narrow for today's baseball fans. The seats in the new ballpark are four inches wider.¹¹
- More benches and bigger seats have been installed in Seattle's Puget Sound ferries to accommodate wider riders.¹²

Despite the rising obesity rates and the tremendous impact they are having on Americans' health and health-care costs, federal and state governments still are doing little to address the problem. To reduce obesity, federal, state and local governments need to mount campaigns to promote healthy eating and physical activity, require calorie labeling in fast food and other chain restaurants, decrease the availability of junk food in schools, make walking and biking safer and more convenient by building bike lanes, sidewalks and trails, increase physical education in schools, restrict junk-food advertising and marketing aimed at children, and put into place other policies and programs that help to make it easier for Americans to eat better and be more physically active.

For more information on what local, state and federal governments can do to promote healthy eating and physical activity, visit www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy.

Sources

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