

LIFE ABUNDANTLY

Black America: The fattest nation in the world

By Minister Abdul Alim Muhammad, M.D.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The United States is an obese nation. Affecting well over a third of the adult population and a significant percentage of children, obesity is associated with many leading causes of death in the population, especially heart disease, hypertension, cancers, diabetes and other chronic debilitating illnesses.

As is true with many health problems, African-Americans suffer disproportionately from obesity. This in part accounts for our higher rate of death and disease from the above named illnesses.

A survey done two years ago by the Nation of Islam Ministry of Health and Human Services showed that the average female member of the Nation of Islam is clinically obese, which is to say more than 20 percent above ideal weight or above 28 on the body-mass index. The average male member of the Nation of Islam, while not obese, was overweight. Although this report is not good, in all likelihood, it reflects better health standards for members of the Nation of Islam than for the general Black population,

which means that we as a people are in serious trouble.

America has been blessed as a nation. Because of her great natural environment and resources, the United States has the potential to be a major agricultural power and food exporter. Most countries in the world don't have America's food bounty or its ability to import products.

Most of the countries we visited in Africa and Asia on our World Friendship Tour relied on food imported from the United States, Europe, Australia and other nations. However, our over abundance of food is one of the main factors contributing to our obesity problem.

The technological advancement of America's economy and the recent transition from labor industries to digital industries has reduced Americans' level of physical activity.

Before the technological age diets were shaped by lifestyles, which were typically labor intensive. A big breakfast provided workers the energy they needed to tackle heavy manual labor, and people often ate substantial amounts of food throughout the day — often consuming

between 3,000 and 5,000 calories — to maintain high output.

Times have changed. Computers have removed a significant portion of the labor quotient. Attitudes and behaviors toward diet have not necessarily kept pace.

A recent study in the "Journal of Women's Health" showed a direct connection between watching television and the availability of fast food as predictors of weight gain, especially of women in higher income brackets. It has been estimated overall that the average American adult watches more than 30 hours of television every week. Statistics reveal that on average Blacks in America watch 20 to 30 percent more television than their White counterparts, i.e., up to 40 hours a week. The connection is clear: the more television we watch and the more fast food we consume while we watch television, the more we weigh.

The fast food "culture" has exploded in recent decades and has even extended to home delivery in some food chains.

The convenience comes with a price: Fast food increases the intake of non-nutritional

food calories since most is fried. Because they contain a higher percentage of fat, fried foods also contain a higher number of calories. One gram of fat produces nine kilocalories of heat versus four kilocalories of heat from one gram of carbohydrate or protein. This means that the same amount of a fatty food will produce twice the weight gain as foods that are low fat or have no fat. Coupled with the lack of caloric expenditure on watching television, weight gain is inevitable.

Could it be that one of the keys to effective weight maintenance is to turn the television off? In some residential neighborhoods at certain hours of the day it is almost impossible to see children outside playing.

Being the fattest nation on the face of the earth is not a distinction to be proud of. Let's stay away from the fast food, turn off the television and learn more appropriate eating behaviors. Since we no longer get all of the physical activity that we need from our work, we should develop daily routines that involve at least a moderate amount of exercise for 20 to 30 minutes at a minimum.

Health group encourages children to go out and play

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Children: Put down the joystick and pick up a basketball, or catcher's mit or anything else associated with outdoor sports or activities, says doctors and health and fitness experts.

Children ought to play hard for at least an hour and possibly several hours every day, according to the first physical activity guidelines drawn specifically for elementary school-age children.

At the least, children should spend one half-hour in moderate activity on most days, based on the recommendations of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, a professional group of physical education teachers, coaches and exercise scientists.

The association wants to give preteens a base of healthful

exercise that may steer them clear of conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease that afflict adult couch potatoes.

Although other groups have drawn sport-specific guidelines for pre-teen activity, this is the first to look at the big picture, said Judith Young, the group's executive director.

The guidelines are not asking too much.

Researchers have found children watching 17 hours of TV a week; a little of that time could go toward physical activity, Young said.

Parents who keep their children heavily scheduled with organized sedentary activities such as piano or computer lessons ought to adjust their priorities to make physical activity part of a child's life, Young said.

It would be good if parents could just send the kids out to play, but today's parents don't, said pediatrician Ivor Horn of Washington.

Some parents are afraid of what could happen to children outside; others are working and don't want their children unattended, she said.

Although the recommendations may look like kid-sized versions of typical ideals for adults, the association's proposals are tailored to children's needs, the report said.

Young children have a natural tendency to be considerably more active than adults, the report said.

The plunge toward adult-style lethargy doesn't begin until the teen-age years.

Children also should get more variety than the regular

routine of walking, weight training, running or aerobics that characterize much adult exercise, the report said.

One reason is that adults generally stick with the sports and athletic skills they learned as children, so adults who were shortchanged as kids are less likely to pick up the skills later, it said.

This could be a big problem for today's video generation. Another reason children shun physical exercise is their well-known distaste for doing anything for long.

"Children have a relatively short attention span compared to adults," the study said.

Well-meaning coaches may not realize this, Young said. "I see lots of T-ball practice with a lot of kids standing around in the outfield, picking grass," she said. "They're bored."

Innovative breast reconstruction method probed

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HOUSTON — Stimulating fat cells to grow in a dome-shaped implant might someday offer a potential new approach to breast reconstruction.

Plastic surgeons at Houston's Baylor College of Medicine are experimenting with this technique for use in breast cancer patients in hopes that it will have fewer risks than current methods used following a mastectomy.

The implant is made of biodegradable polymers and serves as a temporary "scaffolding" to provide shape for the body's fat cells. It dissolves within two to three months as body tissue, including fat cells, fills in the area.

Chemicals known as growth factors are added to the cells to help generate more fat tissue. Growth factors stimulate cells to multiply and mature.


Dr. Eser Yuksel, a Baylor plastic surgeon studying the technique in animals, said the approach has several advantages. "Currently, breast reconstruction in cancer patients usually requires transferring tissue from the abdomen or the back to the chest," he said.

"But there's a risk of tissue scarring, and it is difficult to

restore the volume, shape, size, texture and blood supply of a normal breast."

Because the new approach relies on the body to generate its own tissue, scarring should not be a problem and the breast should look and feel normal, Yuksel said.


So far, the researchers have been able to grow the fat cells, but further studies are needed to observe whether the cells fill out the scaffolding as expected.



MELVIN L. WALKER
6160 W. Tropicana
Suite E-9
702-873-6442
Las Vegas, Nevada

**Competitive Rates,
Personalized
Service**

AUTO
HOME
LIFE
HEALTH



**Colon & Rectal
Surgical Associates
and
Joseph P. Thornton M.D., F.A.C.S.
Are Pleased To Announce The
Association Of
STEPHANIE A. WISHNEV, M.D.**

We Specialize In The Following Diseases:

- Hemorrhoids
- Anal Fistula & Abscess
- Colon Cancer
- Anal Fissure
- Diverticulosis
- Pilonidal Cysts
- Ulcerative Colitis
- Colonoscopy
- Crohn's Disease
- Anal Incontinence

3006 S. Maryland Pkwy., Suite 560

3150 N. Tenaya Way, Suite 270

Serving the Northeast & Summerlin Areas

369-9941

se habla español

Serving Las Vegas Since 1978