

# The Washington Times

## Obesity ‘epidemic’: It’s no big, fat deal The rise of overweight is man’s greatest success story

By: Drew Johnson  
Friday, June 13, 2014

A British medical journal announced a finding last month that might be the best news in the history of the world: Nearly one out of three people in the world is overweight.

Members of the media responded to this thrilling discovery by lamenting the globe’s growing waistline. Pundits rushed to condemn widespread access to inexpensive food. Everyone seemed so excited to attack obesity that no one noticed the report’s incredible story of human achievement and hope.

Throughout history, malnutrition and hunger-related health issues have killed more people than any other cause. Over the course of the past half-century, however, the development of high-yield, disease-resistant crops, modern irrigation methods, and synthetic fertilizers and pesticides combined with improved transportation systems and the explosion of market-based economies throughout the world have made food far more plentiful, affordable and available than ever before. As a result, the world produces enough food to feed every person living today.

Even those who can’t afford food commonly have access to several meals a day through devoted charities, generous individuals and public-assistance programs.

Now, when people die of malnutrition or starvation, it’s almost always a result of war, political unrest or failed government policies that mismanage distribution of crops or food.

The tremendous advancements made in farming and food production have turned obesity into a bigger threat to humanity than starvation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention even refers to obesity as an “epidemic.”

If obesity is an epidemic, it’s too bad there aren’t more like it. This epidemic is the result of so much available food that most people in the world can eat what they want, when they want. The consequences of this epidemic include a dramatic reduction in childhood deaths from malnutrition, better health across the globe and greatly increased longevity.

Simply eating enough to stay alive and productive has been mankind’s greatest challenge throughout history. As a result, during the 3 million years man has been around in some form or fashion, the human body evolved to eat every available morsel of food and maximize every calorie.

Widespread obesity is largely the result of failure of the human body's evolutionary hard-wiring to quickly respond to the abundance of food available in our modern society. Over time, people will be compelled to eat less, and the body will store food less efficiently, resulting in less obesity. For now, however, the increase in obesity should be celebrated, not condemned.

The fact that it's easier for people throughout the world to get too chubby than it is to go hungry should be considered the greatest achievement in history.

Am I saying that obesity is a good thing? Well, it sure beats the heck out of starving to death.

Furthermore, obesity fears have been widely exaggerated.

A 2010 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — the same federal agency claiming there is an obesity epidemic — found that obesity rates in the U.S. are stable or declining. “For women, there were no statistically significant changes in obesity prevalence over the entire decade, while for men there were no prevalence differences during the last five years of the decade,” according to a Cato Institute review of the study.

The National Institutes of Health, a leader in obesity hysteria, was caught exaggerating obesity-related deaths in America. After claiming that 400,000 Americans died each year from obesity, the bureaucracy was forced to reassess its numbers and found that “the number of deaths attributable to obesity each year is closer to 100,000.”

In reality, obesity's dangers are relatively minor — especially when compared to the millions of lives saved by cheap and easy access to food every year. Given the choice between fighting to eat enough food to stay healthy or fighting to turn down enough food to stay healthy, battling an abundance of food is a much easier problem to tackle.

Rather than demonizing increased access to inexpensive food for increasing the number of overweight people in the world, we should be busy celebrating the improved quality of life and dramatic reduction in hunger-related deaths resulting from cheap, plentiful food.