

Have You Heard?

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Does fat breed fat? Or do chocolate eclairs and potato chips make the difference? For years scientists have debated the cause of obesity, some saying it is hereditary and others claiming it is caused by environmental factors such as poor diet and lack of exercise.

A recent study over several years in Denmark strongly supports the theory that obesity has its roots in the genes. However, at this point we cannot ignore other studies showing that obesity is influenced to some degree by social and economic conditions.

Danish researchers traced nearly 5,500 adoptees and their biological and adoptive parents. They computed body mass indexes, measuring fat in all the children and both sets of parents. The

researchers found a clear relationship between the fatness of the adoptees and their biological parents even though most of the children had little or no contact with their natural parents. The results also showed no relationship between obesity in adoptive parents and their adopted children, leading the researchers to conclude that body fat is controlled exclusively by heredity.

This study strongly supports the idea that we should focus our weight-control efforts on people at risk of becoming obese, rather than on the entire population. It is fairly easy to identify those at risk since 80 percent of the children of normal-weight parents are overweight.

However, other research with laboratory animals and people

show that exercise and diet can influence obesity. The choices we make regarding exercise and foods, as well as our perceptions of socially acceptable body shape, play a part in determining how fat we are going to be. There is no simple solution to preventing or treating obesity, nor can we take that stance that it is all the fault of our genes.

Fresh Produce Consumption Booming: The fresh produce section in a typical supermarket is now about twice as big as it was ten years ago. The fresh produce section usually takes up about 15 percent of the total store size and often up to 200 items are stocked.

Why is this particular section of the supermarket expanding? Response to consumer demand! People are simply eating more fresh fruits and vegetables than ever before. Over the past decade, per capita consumption of fresh produce has risen 12 percent in the United States and consumption of canned foods has dropped about 15 percent. If this pattern continues in future years, Americans will eat even more fresh produce.

Some veggies are getting more popular than others. For example, Americans are eating 15 percent more broccoli and the consumption of cauliflower has risen 130 percent in the last ten years. Other

big gainers were lettuce, celery, carrots and tomatoes.

Lots of factors contribute to our eating changes. The baby-boom generation is getting older and it's just natural to eat a bigger variety of foods as you age. Society is also becoming more health conscious and the desire to eat light and get lots of vitamins and fiber tends to draw people to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Consumers not only eat more fresh produce at home, they also want it when they eat out, as evidenced by the continued popularity of salad bars in restaurants. Modern consumers demand quick, low-cost, low-calorie meals and they are getting what they want.

Bulk Foods Growing in Popularity: According to a report in the latest issue of *Family Economics Review* by buying foods in bulk the average consumer saves 50 percent over the price of pre-packaged products. The USDA made a price comparison study of 36 items that can be purchased in either bulk or packaged form. What they found is 93 percent of the time packaged goods were more costly than the same food purchased in bulk form. Six percent of the time the packaged forms actually cost less than the bulk forms. Of course savings var-

ied greatly according to the particular food in question and the brand, type and size it was being compared to.

For example, store brand all-purpose flour in a ten pound bag costs two percent more than bulk flour and store brand corn flakes cost six percent less than corn flakes in bulk form. So you see, you really have to watch to make sure you are getting the most for your money. As you might expect the largest savings in bulk over packaged food forms were for national brands in small packages. But when bulk foods were compared with exceptionally large package sizes (say a five pound bag) the bulk form may be more expensive.

Chester County Swine

The Chester County 4-H Swine Club is seeking new members for 1989. The club meets the third Friday of each month starting in March and continuing through August at the West Nantmeal Township building. Club members can raise from one to six pigs through the summer. Members are taught how to care for their animals plus other basics of livestock care. 4-H members are also taught how to give demonstrations and work together as a team in different projects.

For further information about the 4-H Swine Club, contact Titus Beam at 286-9579 or Nelson Beam at 286-9465. 4-H clubs are open to all Chester County young people ages 8-18, regardless of whether they live on a farm or not. For information about other 4-H projects, contact the 4-H office at 696-3500.

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