

Give Us This Day Our Daily 10K

by John Farrow

“Ya wanna super-size that?”

Just the garden salad for lunch, you say? How about the cup and a half of sugar in the super Big Gulp drink? Is your food pyramid dominated by pizza, Cheetos and Twinkies? Do you think that ketchup is a food group? Or maybe you consider Corn-nuts, with its 40-30-30 ratio of carbs, protein and fat, to be the perfect nutritional supplement, complete with a monthly supply of salt in one serving.

What about your kid's school? Does it require regular PE every year or does “relevancy” trump all? But ask your kid's school board about the self-esteem that comes with not only being able to spell “myocardial infarction” but have one, too?

No matter what the response, we have become a nation of super-sizers. “Generation Y,” says U.S. Surgeon-General Richard H. Carmona, “is turning into Generation XL.”

Just look around. Let's not mince any words - Americans are the fattest people on the planet. Europeans joke about the fat American tourists all the time, but unfortunately the rest of the world is catching up.

This isn't about appearances, either. Obesity is second only to smoking as the most significant contributor to poor health today, not to mention soaring health costs and insurance rates. Excess weight causes over 300,000 unnecessary deaths every year and the risk of premature death increases with weight.

Diabetes is epidemic some rural communities in New Mexico can count one in three of their residents as diabetic. And over 80% of people with diabetes are overweight - an increase of as little as 11 pounds over optimum weight doubles one's chances of developing type 2 diabetes. Obesity is also associated with an increased risk for many types of cancers and every two pounds of excess weight increases the risk of developing arthritis by 13%.

Children are especially hard hit by obesity. Kids are now showing symptoms as early as middle school of heart disease, high cholesterol and high blood pressure previously unheard of before middle age. And type 2 diabetes (previously known as Adult-Onset Diabetes), has increased dramatically in children and adolescents.

What does it take? The Surgeon-General says it takes about half an hour of moderately-intensive exercise every day in addition to customary daily activities. But getting people to commit to even that is like pulling teeth.

However, a 10K will do it - not the 6.2 mile run that most of us associate with that term - but 10,000 steps over the course of an ordinary day, every day. Researchers have found that most people take no more than 3,000 steps in an average day. However, several studies have suggested that taking a total of 10,000 steps - about five miles - over the course of a day will burn between 2,000 and 3,500 extra calories a week, enough for successful weight management.

Of course, runners have an advantage in this area, but with kids today averaging 5½ hours a day in

front of the computer, boob tube or Game Boy, they have the strongest thumbs in the world. It's just that the rest of them never stops jiggling. And if we don't do something soon, we may need to add fork lifts to our SUVs.□

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