

The Spinal Column

A Free Monthly Newsletter For The Friends and Patients of: Dr. Roger D. Smith

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There are two main strategies we can adopt to improve the quality of life. The first is to try taking external conditions match our goals. The second is to change how we experience external conditions to make them fit our goals better. Mihaly Csikszentmihaly

Can Having Obese Friends Make You Fat, Too?

New research suggests obesity may spread through social networks like a virus... and your friends can even live hundreds of miles away!!!



I can't help it – it's in my genes. That's been the surrender slogan for many overweight and obese individuals for years.

And who could blame them? Even many doctors and researchers believed your ability to lose weight – or pack on pounds – was a function of your genetic make-up.

If you were dealt a bad genetic hand, your fate was to be fat. Well, new information shows that might not be the case.

Be Very Careful Who You “Befriend”

The first is a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine which found that the obesity epidemic can spread like a virus through social networks. When a person becomes obese, his friends and siblings are likely to gain weight as well. Quite a bit of weight.

The researchers evaluated a network of 12,067 people who underwent repeated measurements over a period of 32 years.

They found that when a person becomes obese, the chances that a friend will become obese increases by 57 percent. Siblings of obese people have a 40 percent increased risk of obesity, and their spouse's risk increased by 37 percent.

On average, having an obese friend made a person gain 17 pounds, which put many people over the body mass index (BMI) measure for obesity.

Female friendships did not seem to be impacted by obesity. But the chances that a man might gain weight from having a fat pal doubled for so-called

mutual friends -- friends who both listed each other as buddies.

"There is an important implication here for a broadening perspective on treatment for obesity," said Dr. Nicholas Christakis, the study's lead author.

"Attitudes are changing about what constitutes an acceptable body size, more so than a sharing of behaviors.

"We don't think that this is the only cause of obesity. This is adding one additional factor or explanation."

Men Only?

One big question raised by the study was, “why didn't having obese friends affect the women's weight?”

"There is a strong social bias for women towards thinness," said Dr. Robert Kushner, President of the American Board of Nutrition Physician Specialists.

"Social norms may trump social networks here. Guys don't have the same social pressure. Men may be more influenced by their friends."

Other diet experts agree that the inner workings of male friendships may have a lot to do with weight gain.

"Current social stigma against obesity is greater among women, and women jointly discuss weight and support each other in dieting and exercising," said Jeffery Sobal, a Professor of Nutritional Science at Cornell University. *"Men may engage in joint activities that increase weight, such as*

consuming more calories or spending time in sedentary activities."

And here's something interesting reported by researcher James Fowler of Harvard University and Nicholas Christakis of the University of California in San Diego: They say it is plausible that "areas of the brain that correspond to actions such as eating food may be stimulated if these actions are observed by others."

Obesity, they say, is "socially contagious" and, remarkably, the researchers found that to be true even if your loved ones live far away. Social ties seem to play a surprisingly strong role, even more than genes are known to do.

"We were stunned to find that friends who are hundreds of miles away have just as much impact on a person's weight status as friends who are right next door," said Dr Fowler.

Should You Ditch Overweight Friends?

Despite their findings, the researchers said people should not sever their relationships. "There is a ton of research that suggests that having more friends makes you healthier," Fowler said. "So the last thing that you want to do is get rid of any of your friends."

Clearly, this study shows the importance of behavior in weight gain overshadowing genetic make-up. And here are the results of another study that is helping to...

Debunk The Legendary "Fat Gene"

A team of British scientists examined 300 people who became severely obese at a young age, to determine whether a faulty gene was involved. Researchers were looking specifically at the gene in charge of the leptin receptor.

Leptin is a hormone that controls appetite and can influence how much we feel like eating. It has been previously implicated in animal obesity studies.

Scientists examined the obese study participants to see whether this so-called obesity gene was disturbed in any way. They found that only 3 percent of people had an abnormal leptin gene -- indicating that leptin is probably not a factor for most obese people.

And scientists in New Zealand are dispelling the common myth that obesity is caused by "bad genes."

In what is referred to as a breakthrough discovery, scientists from Auckland University's Liggins Institute have discovered that genetic pre-disposition to obesity can be reversed through good nutrition in early childhood.

Their research shows that when a mother is undernourished, her child's body is pre-set to cope

with a life of scarcity—the energy-dense fast food diet of the Western world results in children who are likely to become fat.

In laboratory tests, newborn offspring from both well-fed and undernourished rats were given leptin, a hormone that signals to the body when it has eaten enough. When they became adults, the long-term effects were measured by looking at genes that regulate metabolism in the liver. Rats from well-fed mothers reacted to leptin in the opposite way to those from undernourished mothers.

The researchers urge mothers to eat a more balanced diet (with the right amounts of protein and vitamins) during pregnancy. However, if the fetus is undernourished in the womb, the long-term effects can still be corrected through good nutrition.

Nature or Nurture? The FINAL Word

So what's the final word on all this? Is it our genes that make us easily gain weight which leads to becoming overweight or even obese... or... is it our behavior that shapes (and sculpts) our bodies?

The most likely correct answer is: BOTH.

You are born with a set of genes you cannot change. Some people can eat and eat and never gain a pound. Others can't. But as the recent research is showing – you have much more control over the final outcome than most people are willing to take credit for.

No matter your genetic make-up, you can choose to eat properly and exercise. Thus shaping your body... and... destiny.

And don't forget, if you ever have any questions or concerns about your health, talk to us. Contact us with your, questions. We're here to help, and enjoy nothing more than participating in your lifelong good health.

Welcome New Patients!

Here are the new patients that became members of our practice family this last month! We'd like to welcome you publicly, and wish you all the best!

Sonia L. from Sierra Madre.

(Referred in by Terri G.! Thanks!)

Jennifer A. from Los Alamitos.

Brenda L. from Huntington Beach.

(Referred in by Wild Oats, Long Beach! Thanks!)

Lee S. from Riverside.

(Referred in by Constance I. & Linda V.! Thanks!)

Janet W. from Cypress.

Russell M. from Newport Beach.

Patricia A. from Westminster.

(Referred in by Kanna P.! Thanks!)

Inspirational Story Of The Month –

The True Story About The 2nd Richest Man On The Planet

Genius.

It's something we would all like to be. Or, at least be called from time to time.

It's also a term we use to describe the very successful and very rich. Ok, fine. Maybe Paris Hilton doesn't fall into this "Genius" category. I'll agree with you there. But somewhere back in the Hilton gene pool you can arguable say there was a genius that started the Hilton chain of hotels.

Right?

Let's take another example...

We all know who the 2nd richest man on the planet is. Bill Gates. But, very few know HOW he got to be so rich.

Most people seem to think Gates is a computer geek (and genius) who wrote the breakthrough computer software... DOS. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Truth is, Gates did not write... or invent... ANYTHING. But here's what he DID do: Bill Gates negotiated the deal to purchase DOS for only \$50,000!

It's true. And for only \$50K, Gates took credit for the software...

That Launched Microsoft Into The Stratosphere!!!

Yes, there were other things involved in building the Microsoft empire. But, that was the first HUGE step.

Pretty slick for a 19-year-old Harvard drop-out "nerd."

Anyway, here's the really ironic yet important part: Gates got rich. Gates got famous. But do you know the name of the guy who actually wrote the DOS program?

Bet you don't. 'Cause just about no one does. Well, his name is Tim Paterson. At that time, he was 21 years old and wrote the entire program in... imagine this...

only four months!

What's that you're thinking? Paterson is the REAL brains. The REAL genius.

Maybe he is. At writing computer software. But not at building a big, world-altering company. Not at making money and becoming rich and successful.

For his "genius" efforts, Mr. Paterson got a paltry \$50,000. With no work at all, Mr. Gates parlayed his \$50,000 into becoming the richest man on the planet.

Who's the REAL genius? Both are. Just different kinds.

That's the funny thing about how all this works... no one pays big money to or remembers the worker. Those prizes only go to the one who was smart enough to take credit for it all.

You may be thinking this is not fair. If you are, you would be correct. It's not. Maybe Bill Gate's "Fair" class was coming his next year in college. The year after he dropped out.

And you have to admit, there have been many situations in your life where you have been Tim Paterson for someone. You did all the work while they took the credit. If it's at work, they probably got paid more than you for all you did, too. Nothing can be more frustrating.

But being frustrated is not the answer. If you really think about what Bill Gates did... it's not out of the realm of expectations for most people. Including you.

Sure... maybe not on the scale that Gates succeeded on. That is an extreme example. But, you can have little Gates' successes on a much smaller scale. After all, you don't have to be the richest person on the planet to be happy... do you?

Instead of being paralyzed by the way things actually work in the real world, accept it and start using it to your advantage. Stop thinking like Tim Paterson and start thinking like Bill Gates.

After all, who would you rather be: the one trying to write DOS or the one brokering the deal, taking the credit...and... making the money?

Clearly, the fact it does not take "genius" intelligence to be super successful is inspiration to all.

We love helping our patients and their friends and relatives through their tough times and getting them feeling better! We are here to help you stay feeling better and looking younger! Don't be a stranger. Call us, and we will assist you in putting together a customized maintenance plan. It's not a luxury anymore! With our low monthly payment plan, it's less expensive to maintain your good health! You really can afford Chiropractic care! Don't wait until you can no longer move!

Did You Know?...Protect Your Heart By Lowering Cholesterol

Cholesterol levels are checked by a blood test and a cholesterol level should be a routine test during your annual check-up. If you have high cholesterol, your doctor may decide to check it more often. Your cholesterol level should be in the range of 140 to 200 milligrams of cholesterol, per deciliter of blood. People who have high cholesterol are at higher risk of heart attack and stroke. Cholesterol levels that are too low can be an indication of health problems such as liver cancer. The type of cholesterol that is found can also make a difference to your health risk. LDL or low density lipoproteins are considered "bad" cholesterol while HDL or high density lipoproteins are considered good cholesterol. Your risk of heart disease will be lower if your HDL accounts for more than 25% of your total cholesterol.

Causes of High Cholesterol

- Cholesterol naturally increases with age
- It is higher in men and post menopausal women
- Family history
- High fat diet
- Sedentary lifestyle (little or no exercise)
- High alcohol intake
- Cigarette Smoking
- Diabetes
- Under active thyroid gland (hypothyroidism)

High Cholesterol Can Often Be Treated By:

- Following a low fat, high fiber diet
- Increase exercise
- Control blood sugar levels if diabetic
- Taking medications as ordered to control low thyroid levels
- Quit Smoking
- Limit alcohol intake.

A low fat diet and exercise should be initiated regardless of method undertaken to control cholesterol levels.



Tip Of The Month “Bottled Water Hoax?” *Is that bottled water you’re drinking from a mountain spring or just glorified tap water? The answer may surprise you!*

You may or may not remember this. Several months ago there was a study released that brought to light a potential concern with bottled water. Researchers at the University of Heidelberg Institute of Environmental Geochemistry (Germany) measured the abundance of antimony, a potentially toxic trace element, in 15 brands of Canadian bottled water and 48 European brands. They reported concentrations of more than 100 times the average level of antimony in pristine ground waters, which is 2 parts per million. After letting the same bottles sit at room temperature for 6 months, the researchers found that average antimony concentrations in the Canadian bottled waters increased by 19%, and by 90% in the European brands. Most of the waters tested were packaged in polyethylene terephthalate (PET) containers. Researchers did not know why, but it was clear that water bottled in PET contains much more antimony than regular tap water. They also don’t know the impact this could have on your health. Researchers said it’s something that should be looked into further. Although antimony is a suspected carcinogen, there is no proof.

No Proof? “Proof” or no proof... this is definitely something that raises concern. Especially since according to statistics provided by the Beverage Marketing Corporation state: *“Bottled water emerged as the second largest commercial beverage category by volume in the United States in 2003, and, despite its significant stature, it continued to grow at a rapid pace in 2005. The category is growing even more forcefully on a global scale, but in the U.S., volume is unparalleled. In 2005, total U.S. category volume surpassed 7.5 billion gallons, a 10.7% advance over 2004’s volume level. That translates into an average of 26.1 gallons per person, which means U.S. residents now drink more bottled water annually than any other beverage, other than carbonated soft drinks (CSDs).”*

More Bad News. But now there’s more bad news for the bottled water industry. According to the Associated Press July 28, 2007, PepsiCo Inc., is offering some clarity about the source of its top selling bottled water – Aquafina. It recently announced it would change the label on Aquafina water bottles to spell out that the drink comes from the same source as tap water. According to the AP article: *“A group called Corporate Accountability International has been pressuring bottled water sellers to curb what it calls misleading marketing practices. The group has criticized PepsiCo over its blue Aquafina label with a mountain logo as perpetuating the misconception that the water comes from spring sources. Aquafina is the single biggest bottled water brand, and its bottles are now labeled "P.W.S." The new labels will spell out "public water source." The corporate accountability group is also pressing for similar concessions from The Coca-Cola Co., which owns the Dasani water brand, and Nestle Waters North America, seller of Nestle Pure Life purified drinking water, which gets some of its water from municipal sources. Dasani's Web site says that Dasani comes from local water supplies, is filtered using a process called reverse osmosis and enhanced with minerals. The best bet may be purchasing your own water filtration system. At least that way you know for sure what you are getting.*

Remember, we’re always here, using the miracle of Chiropractic to help your body heal and maintain the health you deserve.

Smith Upper Cervical Health Care would like to thank Reina P. Charles for helping us get this to you!