



## Louisville Center for Weight Loss

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# The Causes of Obesity

- Obesity is caused by a mix of genetic and environmental factors
- There are genetic defects in animals and people that cause severe obesity
- Having obese parents greatly increases the risks of a child being obese
- Obesity has increased steadily over the last 50 years in the United States
- The dramatic increase in obesity is believed to be due to larger portion sizes (“Do you want to super size that?”), high fat foods, and decreased physical activity
- Japanese obesity increases with migration to Hawaii and more to San Francisco. The same is true of Africans moving to the Caribbean and to Chicago
- Weight gain is caused by an imbalance in the amount of food eaten versus the amount of exercise done. The imbalance is usually very small. Lots of small seemingly inconsequential acts add up over time
- Some medications can cause weight gain, including tricyclic antidepressants (Elavil), birth control pills, estrogen, steroids, SSRIs (Paxil), and Periactin
- In studies of twins, 80% of the differences in weight are from genetic factors, and 20% from environmental factors
- Obesity probably requires both a genetic predisposition and an environment of abundant high calorie fat food
- Most people appear to have a weight “set point” that the body tries to maintain
- There is evidence that increased TV viewing has a significant effect on obesity, not only by decreasing activity but by increasing food intake by watching food commercials
- Reduced demand for routine physical activity as part of our lifestyle may explain the rising prevalence of obesity in the US