

# 10 Reasons Behind Most Chronic Health Issues

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✓ Fact Checked

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Obesity is a driving force behind preventable chronic diseases, and diet is a major factor in maintaining a healthy weight. Just 10 food companies control the manufactured food in your grocery store, most of which is ultraprocessed and high in sugar
- › Many of those foods are made with genetically modified crops, which make up 70% of crops grown in the U.S. and 70% of the American diet is processed food, leading to many of the current chronic diseases
- › Some doctors have become legalized drug dealers, overprescribing pharmaceutical products as a symptom of a larger issue in medicine, in which doctors are more influenced by Big Pharma than by the health care needs of their patients
- › Government policies began favoring large corporate farmers in the 1970s, and now Big Pharma also controls agriculture and seed supplies, which means they control the food you eat and when you get sick, supply you with drugs to treat your chronic disease
- › Replacing saturated fat with sugar, whole grain and vegetable and seed oils has had a significant effect on the rising number of people with obesity and chronic illness. With each passing year, it becomes more important to be aware of the food choices you make as they impact your health and wellness

The 2015-2016 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) recorded the highest rate of obesity ever documented by the survey – 39.6% of adults with obesity.<sup>1</sup> Those numbers only continue to grow. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>2</sup> recorded 42.5% of adults 20 and over with obesity in 2017-2018.

When the percentage of people who are overweight is included, that percentage rises dramatically to 73.6% of the population. The adult obesity prevalence map<sup>3</sup> shows the highest prevalence of obesity and overweight in the Midwest and southern states with greater than 40% of the population recorded as obese.

The exception is Florida, where the percentage of the population who are obese ranges between 25% and 30%. The greatest challenge to maintaining a healthy weight is your diet. There are other factors that contribute to weight gain, including a lack of physical activity.

But it's important to recognize that you'll never out-exercise a poor diet. So, it's the first factor you should address if you want to maintain a healthy weight, which is important as obesity is one of the major triggers for preventable disease.<sup>4</sup>

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,<sup>5</sup> 6 of every 10 adults in the U.S. have at least one chronic health condition, such as heart disease, cancer or Type 2 diabetes. These are also the leading causes of death in the U.S.,<sup>6</sup> and obesity and overweight are significant risk factors for them.<sup>7</sup>

One 10-year study<sup>8</sup> showed there was a dose-response relationship between being overweight or obese and the development of several chronic health conditions including golf including gallstones, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, and heart disease.

There are significant challenges within the food supply that make it more and more difficult each month for people to make healthy choices. @MrSollozzo from the Meat Mafia Podcast created an informative graphic tweet<sup>9</sup> in which he lists many of the diet and food-related challenges faced by Americans today, such as:

## **1. 10 Companies Control Almost All Manufactured Food**

Oxfam America is a nonprofit organization that focuses on the inequalities that drive poverty and Injustice. In 2014<sup>10</sup> they created a powerful graphic image demonstrating

how 10 companies control nearly every food product and beverage you find in the grocery store. Between them, revenues add up to more than \$1 billion every day.

These companies include CocaCola, Mars, Nestle, Kellogg, General Mills, Wrigley and Wonka. They have a vested interest in ensuring loyal customers and engaging new customers each year using advertising to promote their products as healthy, wise diet choices for foods or as a fun dessert splurge.

It is difficult for many to ignore the hot buttons<sup>11</sup> they push in their advertising campaigns, which include featuring catchy packaging,<sup>12</sup> funding nutrition studies<sup>13</sup> and publishing enticing print and video campaigns.<sup>14</sup>

Advertising drives people's preferences and eating habits, which supports a company's financial return, and in turn, drives the obesity epidemic. If you think your hands are tied, though, you still have a voice in what these companies market as you can vote with your pocketbook by refusing to purchase their products.

## **2. 70% of All Crops Are Genetically Modified (GM)**

When you're looking through the produce aisle for tonight's meal, consider the fact that nearly 70% of crops grown in the U.S. are from genetically modified seeds. According to data<sup>15</sup> from the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) the most popular GM crops are soybeans, maize, cotton and canola.

Soybeans, corn and canola are products used in many processed and ultraprocessed foods on grocery store shelves. There are two types of genetically engineered seed: herbicide-tolerant (HT) and insect-resistant (Bt).<sup>16</sup> The USDA finds the adoption rate for both is increasing, and the adoption of stacked seed varieties, which has both traits, has accelerated in recent years.

The implications for your health after exposure to GM plants are significant and tied to the use of the herbicide glyphosate,<sup>17</sup> which has increased dramatically in the last 20 years.<sup>18</sup> Your gut flora is extremely important to your health and is negatively impacted

by glyphosate. Experts have tied exposure to glyphosate and GM plants to an imbalance in gut bacteria<sup>19</sup> and a variety of chronic diseases, including obesity.<sup>20</sup>

### **3. Meat Packers Underpay Ranchers and Overcharge Consumers**

In 2020, the Department of Justice began formally investigating antitrust violations of the four largest beef packers in the U.S.,<sup>21</sup> following complaints from several states and agricultural organizations. The "Big 4" companies are Cargill, Tyson Foods, JBS and National Beef, and they are responsible for processing 85% of all beef made into steaks, roasts and other cuts.<sup>22</sup>

When hamburger is factored into the equation, the Big 4 processes 70% of beef production. The four firms gained greater control of the industry in the early 1990s when USDA data showed the market share of slaughtered animals rose from 25% in 1977 to 71% in 1992. Several incidents brought attention to the consolidation that gave just four companies controlling interest in the market.

Cattle ranchers are frustrated by the price drops they experience when a meatpacking plant closes, while the packing companies benefit from rising meat prices. In the short term, this impacts the rancher's livelihood and ability to stay in business. In the long-term, rising prices at the grocery store from lower supply levels may move more people to purchase plant-based fake "meat".

### **4. 70% of the American Diet Is Processed Food**

When you investigate the links between obesity and chronic illness, roughly 70% of the crops grown in the U.S. are genetically modified; 73.6% of the population is overweight or obese;<sup>23</sup> roughly 60% of the population has at least one chronic disease and, according to data from two studies,<sup>24,25</sup> consumption of ultraprocessed and processed foods is just over 70% in the general population.

There are well over 40,000 on grocery store shelves, with the majority being processed and ultraprocessed foods.<sup>26</sup> One study<sup>27</sup> found that 57.9% of foods eaten were

ultraprocessed and contributed 89.7% of calories from added sugar. Data also show that an excess of sugar in the diet may lead to a decrease in satiety, an increase in calorie intake and impaired energy production in your body.<sup>28</sup>

One model tracked the link between rising sugar consumption and obesity rates, finding that "past U.S. sugar consumption is at least sufficient to explain adult obesity change in the past 30 years."<sup>29</sup>

## **5. Doctors Have Become Legalized Drug Dealers**

@MrSolozzo calls doctors "legalized drug dealers,"<sup>30</sup> as many frequently overprescribe medications<sup>31</sup> rather than help patients change lifestyle habits to avoid chronic disease. Examples can be found in patients who are overprescribed pain medication, proton pump inhibitors, antidepressants,<sup>32</sup> antibiotics<sup>33</sup> and medications to manage the side effects of other medications.<sup>34</sup>

This is a symptom of a larger condition in which a physician's care appears to be highly influenced by the pharmaceutical industry and not by a focus on the prevention or treatment of physical conditions that include nutritional and lifestyle alterations.

## **6. Big Pharma Controls Agriculture and the Seed Supply**

In the 1990s, laws were introduced to protect bioengineered crops. In 2021, four large corporations owned more than 50% of the world's seeds, which is a staggering monopoly that dominates the global food chain.<sup>35</sup> One of those companies is Bayer, which acquired Monsanto in 2018.<sup>36</sup>

Monsanto is an agrochemical and agricultural biotechnology company, owned by a pharmaceutical company that controls a significant portion of the world's seed supply, namely GM seed.<sup>37</sup> Essentially, this means that Monsanto controls the GE food you eat, and Bayer supplies you with the drugs you need to treat your chronic disease triggered by that food.

## **7. Government Policies Favor Corporate Farming**

Earl Butz was secretary of the USDA in the 1970s. It was his vision to create a centralized food system which, as Grist writes, "plunged a pitchfork into New Deal agricultural policies that sought to protect farmers from the big agribusiness companies whose interests he openly pushed."<sup>38</sup> At the time he was appointed to the USDA, he had served as a board member for several large firms, including Ralston Purina.

Critics predicted that these ties might compromise his ability to function objectively, and the prophecy was fulfilled when he forced agribusiness and large farming conglomerates on the national interest. His legacy continues to thrive as small farmers are gradually forced out of business and large conglomerates buy up huge tracts of land, expanding the reach of GE produce and concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs).

Most people have likely never shaken the hand of their local farmer, who may sell produce and meat at local farmers markets, to small grocers or directly to you, the consumer. One of the best things about these local food suppliers is that they are incentivized to provide you with the best quality food to stay in business.

## **8. 'Science' Replaced Saturated Fat With Refined Sugar**

Research known as the Seven Countries Study was conceived by the late Ancel Keys, a mid-20th century physiologist who promoted polyunsaturated fats over natural, saturated dietary fats.<sup>39</sup> He launched the study in 1958 with the intent of identifying dietary patterns that impact heart disease.<sup>40</sup>

The results of the study changed government dietary recommendations for decades, with recommendations to eliminate saturated fats from your diet. Along with the addition of polyunsaturated fats to replace the missing natural fats, the food industry also added sugar and whole grains to the mix of processed foods meant to tempt your palate.

Yet, as science has demonstrated, this move has had a broad impact on health and instead of helping to decrease heart disease, actually increased many people's risk of coronary heart disease as replacement leads to:<sup>41</sup>

*"... changes in LDL, high-density lipoprotein (HDL), and triglycerides that may increase the risk of CHD.*

*Additionally, diets high in sugar may induce many other abnormalities associated with elevated CHD risk, including elevated levels of glucose, insulin, and uric acid, impaired glucose tolerance, insulin and leptin resistance, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, and altered platelet function. A diet high in added sugars has been found to cause a 3-fold increased risk of death due to cardiovascular disease."*

As a result of the new processed foods, average Americans developed a sweet tooth so strong that many experts believe they are consuming as much as 130 pounds of sugar each year.<sup>42,43,44</sup> Sugar has become so cheap and ubiquitous, that it's in nearly every processed and ultra-processed food.

## **9. Natural Fats Replaced With Factory-Produced Vegetable Oils**

According to the USDA, consumption per year of added fat and oil rose by 30 pounds from 1970 to 2010. However, the amount of saturated animal fat declined while the rate of vegetable fat from seed oils increased.<sup>45</sup> These are industrial vegetable and seed oils that are likely behind the majority of diseases diagnosed in this past century.

The number of people diagnosed with heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, metabolic syndrome, Alzheimer's disease and stroke has all risen dramatically in the last decades and they all are linked to the consumption of seed oil.

In a 45-minute presentation titled, "Diseases of Civilization: Are Seed Oil Excesses the Unifying Mechanism?" Dr. Chris Knobbe reveals startling evidence that seed oils, so prevalent in modern diets, are the reason for most of today's chronic diseases.<sup>46</sup>

His research indicts the high consumption of omega-6 seed oil in everyday diets as the major unifying driver of the chronic degenerative diseases of modern civilization. He calls the inundation of Western diets with harmful seeds oils "a global human experiment ... without informed consent."<sup>47</sup>

## **10. Fake Meat Plant Foods Sold as Healthier Choice**

Although many fake meat products are sold as a healthier choice for you and the environment, it turns out that this is yet another smokescreen to control the food supply. As meat prices rise, more people may consider a choice they may not have before: to eat fake meat.

Total revenues for the plant-based Beyond Meat brand have grown steadily from \$16.2 million in 2016 to \$87.9 million in 2018<sup>48</sup> and exceeded expectations in 2020, hitting \$406.8 million.<sup>49</sup> The rising market share is a testament to how well their branding and advertising has convinced the public that they are healthier than pure animal protein.

Yet, it's widely known that ultraprocessed foods are the enemies of good health, even increasing the risk of premature death by 62% when eaten in quantities of more than four servings each day, with each added serving increasing the risk by another 18%.<sup>50</sup>

So what is plant-based "meat," anyway? "It's not food; it's software, intellectual property — 14 patents, in fact, in each bite of Impossible Burger with over 100 additional patents pending for animal proxies from chicken to fish," says Seth Itzkan, environmental futurist and cofounder and co-director of Soil4Climate.<sup>51</sup>

He suggests fake meat products are destroying the environment by perpetuating a harmful reliance on genetically engineered (GE) grains while accelerating soil loss and detracting from regenerative agriculture.

## **Buyer Beware**



Controlling the food supply is one more way of controlling your health and your future. With every passing year, it becomes more important to be aware of the food choices you make each day as they impact your health and wellness.

Your nutrition dictates how well your body works, and therefore how well you feel each day. As summer approaches, make a commitment to make smart choices for your health and visit local farmers markets for produce, seek out regeneratively-grown produce, meat and dairy products and consider buying your meat and dairy directly from local farmers.

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