Carol Sieverts

English 1010

9 April 2012

Happy Health Instead of Happy Meal

America is being faced with a national health epidemic when it comes to Fast Food. Americans now consume more food with less nutrition. Fast Food has replaced the well balanced diet that was once the norm for our country. Now people would rather eat out than make a home cooked meal. This has also affected our culture in health and attitude towards laziness. We are starving ourselves from vitamins and nutrition all for the sake of convenience and instant gratification.

A 2006 study done by obesity researcher Kelley Borradaile showed people would rather eat out than make something at home. This study has shown people who eat three to four fast food meals per week tend to weigh more than someone who doesn’t eat fast food very much or at all (Hellmich). According to the website health.nytimes.com guide on nutrition, “fast food is typically high in calories, fat, saturated fat, sugar, and salt.” The guide also talks about how even with the healthy choices at fast food restaurants fast food typically is not the healthy choice ("Fast Food Nutrition").

Jonathan Benson staff writer for Naturalnews.com reported on a Stacey Irvine 17 teen year old girl who ate nothing but McDonald Chicken Mc Nuggets for 15 years and had health issues because of it. Her mother allowed Stacey to eat, “mechanically separated chicken, which is created from chickens that have been stripped down to the bone, and then ground up into chicken mash,” (qtd in Benson). Mc Nuggets are knowingly unhealthy however, another equally disgusting processed product is Pink Slime which is described by msnbc.msn.com “lean beef carcass trimmings, which have been separated from fat and treated with ammonium hydroxide.” (Aleccia). McDonalds and other Fast Food restaurants until recently would use Pink Slime in their beef products.

Believe it or not Pink slime and Chicken Mc Nuggets are not the worst of it. Ingredients in a Wendy’s Original Chocolate Frosty from the restaurant’s nutritional fact page consists of “Milk, Sugar, Corn Syrup, Cream, Whey, Nonfat Dry Milk, Cocoa (processed with alkali), Guar Gum, Mono and Diglycerides, Cellulose Gum, Carrageenan, Calcium Sulfate, Disodium Phosphate, Artificial and Natural Flavoring, Vitamin A Palmitate” ("Wendy’s "). These food items listed are mostly preservatives. They are all processed and nothing about them is healthy.

The so-called healthy choices most fast food restaurants provide are still lacking in nutrition. For example, look at a typical chicken salad from some of the fast food restaurants:

* McDonald’s Southwestern Grilled Chicken Salad: Cal. 290/Cal. from fat.8/Cholesterol70/Sodium 650/ Carbs. 28/ Sugar 11 ("http://www.mcdonalds.com").
* Carl Jr’s Original Grilled Chicken Salad: Cal. 270/ Cal. from fat. 80/ Cholesterol 70/Sodium 800/ Carbs. 23/Sugar 6("Carl's Jr").
* Wendy’s Apple Pecan Chicken Salad: Cal. 350/ Cal. From fat. 7/ Cholesterol 115/ Sodium 950/ Carbs. 30/ Sugar 20("Wendy’s").

These healthy choices are high in sodium, cholesterol, calories and carbohydrates which show how unhealthy fast food is.

People in general think that ordering from a dollar menu will provide a smaller portion, therefore it must not be too horrible. Well it is! Here are a few examples of dollar menu items and their total calories:

* Burger King Single Stacker: 380 Calories (www.bk.com).
* Taco Bell Crunchy Taco ( hard shell): 170 in Calories (www.tacobell.com/food).
* McDonalds’ MC Double Cheese Burger: 390 in Calories (http://www.mcdonalds.com).

These dollar menu items are again, high in fat, sodium, cholesterol and sugar. They may be lower in cost but your health pays a heavier price.

A diet consisting mostly of these types of food is going to cause a person serious health problems in life. Gary Gardner and Brain Halweil’s article in *World Watch* “Escaping Hunger, Escaping Excess” brings up how America is high in malnutrition from overeating processed foods. The cost of medical expenses from abuse of fast food alone are horrendous,

“the direct costs (hospital stays, medicine, treatment, and visits to the doctor) and indirect costs (reduced productivity, missed workdays, disability pensions) of obesity in the United States to be $118 billion annually. This sum, equal to nearly 12 percent of the U.S. annual health budget, is more than double the $47 billion in costs attributable to cigarette smoking-a better known and heavily taxed drag on public health.”

Gardner and Halweil give ideas on how to make the public more aware of these ‘toxic foods’ by labeling any foods high in salt, fat or sugar. Low nutritional foods should be taxed higher than foods that are healthy and part of a well balanced diet. Government needs to improve on educating the country about smart nutrition (Gardner &Halweil).

Even with these splendid ideas of bettering the situation at hand, it is up to the American people to change and improve their health. Stop with the laziness trend and start with the recreational sports or work outs once a day. Pick an apple instead of McDonalds Apple Pie. Just do it! Making a healthy meal at home and walking everyday shouldn’t be a pain, but a pleasant experience. The overly processed, pre -heated, non-fresh foods that the Fast Food Industry provides for this country and many others is harmful to the body. This garbage will not give someone their ideal body type or add years to their life.

Morgan Spurlock, from the documentary *Super Size Me*, sums up how terrible this food is and how little the Fast Food Industry cares about our well being. “If this ever-growing paradigm is going to shift, it's up to you. But if you decide to keep living this way, go ahead. Over time, you may find yourself getting as sick as I did or end up here [emergency Room]or here [cemetery].” ("http://www.imdb.com") What is it going to be? Instant gratification that is harmful to the body or a better body and well being for everyone; happy health or happy meal?

Works Cited:

Aleccia, JoNel. "'Pink slime' in your meat? Labels to tell you, USDA says." vitals.msnb 28 Feb. 2011. Web. 9 Apr 2012.

Benson, Jonathan. "Teen girl rushed to hospital for eating nothing but chicken nuggets for 15 years." *Naturalnews*. 7 Feb. 2012. Web. 9 Apr 2012.

"Burger King Lunch and Dinner Menu." www.bk.com, n.d. Web. 9 Apr 2012

"Carl’s Jr. delicious food. Tasty Facts." www.carlsjr.com, n.d. Web. 9 Apr 2012.

“Fast Food Nutrition” *healthnytimes*. 2 July 2011. Web. 9 Apr 2012.

Gardner, Gary, andBrian Halweil. "Escaping Hunger, Escaping Excess." World Watch. July/Aug. 2000: 24-35. SIRS Researcher. Web. 9 Apr 2012.

Hellmich, Nanci. "You Guessed It: Fast Food Means Gained Weight." *USA TODAY*. Oct. 22 2007: n.p. SIRS Issues Researcher*.* Web. 09 Apr 2012.

"McDonalds Nutrition Info." *Mcdonalds.* Food Nutrition. 2008. Web. 9 Apr 2012.

"Memorable quotes for Super Size Me 2004." Imdb. Quotes. 2008. Web. 9 Apr 2012.

"TacoBell Menu Item Crunchy-Taco." *Tacobell.* Menu Item. . 2009 Web. 9 Apr 2012.

"Wendy’s Nutrition Facts & Personalize It." Wendy’s. Food Nutrition. 2008. Web. 9 Apr 2012.