

Obesity

The dramatic rise in obesity rates among adults and children over the past two decades has become a major public health concern since obesity is linked to several chronic diseases including heart disease, Type II diabetes and elevated cholesterol. The Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils (ISEO) recognizes that obesity is a complex issue requiring comprehensive solutions including the strategies of altered eating habits, increased physical exercise, public health education programs, expanded nutrition research, improved communications efforts and new government/industry partnerships.

Obesity and overweight are primarily caused by eating more calories than are burned through physical exercise. Therefore, the ISEO believes the foundation of obesity prevention strategies must be to encourage the addition of more healthy lifestyles and improved weight management practices by individual consumers.

ISEO supports the dietary advice provided in the current U.S. Dietary Guidelines which essentially advocates the consumption of a wide variety of foods in moderation combined with a physical exercise regimen. A recent report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) confirms this advice by recommending Americans get 45-65% of their calories from carbohydrates, 20-35% from fat and 10-35% from protein while getting at least one hour of moderate exercise per day. Such dietary advice emphasizes moderation and variety regarding the intake of all nutrients in the total diet. This concept allows considerable flexibility in the selection of foods as long as an appropriate balance is maintained between total caloric intake and calories expended.

Like proteins and carbohydrates, fats are an important part of the diet and essential for life and basic body functions. They are a major source of energy providing 9 calories per gram. Fats carry fat soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K) throughout the body. They are equally important sources of essential fatty acids which are required for certain bodily functions, but which cannot be made by the body. Fat also provides the feeling of satiety, depressing one's appetite, an important consideration in avoiding the intake of excessive calories.

In summary, ISEO agrees with health experts that the key to preventing obesity is to maintain a balance between dietary caloric intake and energy expended. This may be achieved by adhering to the advice of health professionals who recommend the consumption of a wide variety of foods in moderation coupled with a physical exercise regimen. ISEO is working with the food industry to create new and healthier food products that fit into an overall healthy diet. ISEO encourages consumers to use available nutrition information to make improved and meaningful food choices in an effort to maintain good health and prevent obesity.