Dynamic Chiropractic

U.S. Food Consumption Data Is Now More Accurate: Part 2 - Guarded Optimism

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In part 1 of this series, we reviewed the new data on the years 1970-1995. As mentioned, one of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research improvements was the length of time it now takes to publish statistics. The latest information is now only two years old; we will look at the past five years.

Analyzing the five years beginning in 1999 through 2003 leads me to have guarded optimism. The reason for optimism is that the three-decade rise in the consumption of grains, sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, cheese, and soft drinks appears to have stabilized, and in the case of sugar, actually decreased. Unfortunately, this plateau is over 2,700 calories per day - more than 200 calories a day greater than in 1990 and more than 400 calories per day above 1980 levels. And, past history shows us that it is not unusual to have four- to five-year periods of plateau before caloric intake rises again. Food is so plentiful and affordable in the United States that for the first time in history, the poorest citizens in America have higher rates of obesity than the wealthy. Thus, we must continue to hold our breath to see if we have indeed finally stopped our decades-old caloric increase.

The beginning of the 21st century saw all of the most popular diets blaming carbohydrates for the huge weight gains in the 1980s and 1990s. It is very clear from reading the charts when the general public really grasped the message that fats were OK to eat. Note the jump in total fats between 1999 and 2000 (see Table 1). However, the high-carb era showed us the public only accept those parts of a diet they like, and often don't read the fine print. In the case of the high carbohydrates, people ate huge amounts of pasta, bagels, and sugar, which were not advocated by the high-carb-diet experts. The result was that people ate more and gained weight. When the anti-carb wave hit, the public latched on to the part of the message that said fats are OK, but neglected to balance the types of fat consumed or significantly decrease consumption of other foods (see tables 2 and 3). Therefore, the "protein era" has resulted in all-time highs for daily caloric intake. There are more overweight and obese Americans now than ever. I hope the next big thing in the battle of the bulge will be the revolutionary concept of reducing caloric intake and increasing caloric expenditure.

Table 1: U.S. Food Supply Per-Capita Calories - Calories Per Person Per Day

Year	Totals
1999	2,684
2000	2,795
2001	2,751
2002	2,774
2003	2,757

Table 2: Per-Capita Consumption Data - Food (1999-2003)

Pounds per person per year (adjusted for losses)	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Red meat (beef, veal, pork and lamb)	69.5	68.7	67.3	68.9	67.5
Poultry (chicken and turkey)	38.6	38.9	38.9	40.5	40.8
Fish (fresh, frozen, canned and cured)	10.3	10.6	10.2	10.7	11.2
Nuts	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.5
Sugar	107.7	106.0	104.7	104.0	100.9
High-fructose corn syrup	45.4	44.6	44.5	44.7	43.4
Grain	137.0	139.1	136.4	133.9	135.7
Total vegetables	163.5	167.2	162.5	162.8	163.8
Cheese	20.9	21.4	21.7	22.0	22.1
Total fats (oils, added fats, butter, cream, etc.)	56.5	66.8	66.0	68.6	68.0
Fresh fruit	54.1	53.6	52.1	52.9	53.0

Table 3: Per-Capita Consumption Data - Beverages (1999-2003)

Gallons per person per year (adjusted for loss)	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Milk	22.9	22.5	22.0	21.9	21.6
Juice	6.6	6.5	6.0	5.9	6.1
Bottled water	16.4	17.4	18.8	20.0	22.0
Soft drinks: diet	11.4	11.6	11.2	11.2	11.1
Soft drinks: regular	38.2	37.7	35.5	35.4	35.3
Alcohol	25.0	24.9	25.0	25.2	25.1

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