

Is McDonald's Beginning to Correct Its Course?

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Back on April 27, 2010, the Santa Clara County (California) Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance banning the use of toys to encourage children to eat unhealthy meals offered by restaurants.¹ This was the first move by a government body to try to address the obesity epidemic that is plaguing America's children. Approximately 12.5 million children over 2 years of age are currently considered obese. That's **17 percent** of our children or one out of every six kids.²

Shortly after the decision by the Santa Clara County board, *Dynamic Chiropractic* published an article focusing [on the issue](#) and asking DCs and their patients to contact McDonald's and encourage the fast-food chain to improve the meals it sells to children.³

Then on Nov. 2, 2010, also as reported in *DC*, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted 8-3 to require that kids' meals meet certain nutritional standards before they can be sold with toys. This law sets the bar for *healthy* children's meals as those "that have less than 600 calories, contain fruits and vegetables, and include beverages without excessive fat or sugar."⁴⁻⁵

Apparently feeling the pressure from these and other government regulations, the McDonald's organization is beginning to make concessions. On July 26, 2011, it announced its "[Commitments to Offer Improved Nutrition Choices](#)."⁶ This announcement included the decision to do the following:

- By March 2012: provide apples in every Happy Meal (with a smaller serving of French fries)
- By 2015: "reduce sodium an average of 15 percent overall across its national menu of food choices"
- By 2020: "reduce added sugars, saturated fat and calories through varied portion sizes, reformulations and innovations."
- "[Increase] customers' and employees' access to nutrition information."

A review of the current McDonald's kids' meals menu⁷ reveals that of the current 24 meal combinations offered, five still exceed 600 calories; specifically some of the meals with cheeseburgers and a hamburger, fries and low-fat chocolate-milk meal. The nutritional information for the new menu that includes meals with apples and fewer fries is not out yet. But the company seems to be moving in the right direction. [One source](#) shows that the new Happy Meals will have 6 fewer grams of fat and between 110 and 120 fewer calories.⁸

It is no secret what a healthy meal should include. The high sugar content, lack of whole grains and lack of meaningful vegetables in kids' meals are still at issue. As a food source for millions of children, McDonald's cannot ignore its responsibility to offer healthier meals to children, regardless of what children will eat or parents will buy.

One can only hope that companies such as McDonald's will not only listen to the voice of the public (not to mention government regulations), but also consider carefully its role in good health. Our country is currently facing an epidemic, with almost 75 percent of our adults overweight, obese or

extremely obese.⁹ What we as a country are eating plays a major role in this epidemic.

As a doctor of chiropractic, you are uniquely qualified to work with people to correct their eating habits, introduce them to the concept of solid nutrition (a concept that may be foreign to them), teach them about exercise and provide the necessary adjustments to help them achieve optimal health. As you educate and inform your patients, they will in turn make better choices, which will ultimately send a message to fast-food companies that they need to be more nutritionally aware.

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