

When you have something as massive and scary as the obesity epidemic, it's hard to point the finger at one single element and say, "that's why it happened." But however you slice it, the low-fat movement played a part in the epidemic.

After World War II, heart disease rates began to rise precipitously. In the 1970s, a committee led by Senator George McGovern issued a report advising Americans to lower their risk of heart disease by eating less fat. This recommendation was based on evidence that linked diet to heart disease. Unfortunately, the report wrongly singled out saturated fat as the wicked element in our diet responsible for all our problems. This was the beginning of the low-fat movement.

And of the obesity epidemic.

It's more than a coincidence that they happened at the same time, and here's why.

Once dietary fat was "identified" as the chief culprit in heart disease — a huge case of mistaken identity in my opinion — food manufacturers sprang into action. The race was on to produce low-fat and no-fat foods, and to engineer the saturated fat out of everything.

This, in turn, led to a slew of "food-like" products, manufactured and processed edible substances bearing little resemblance to whole foods, and to idiotic experiments like margarine. Add to this witches' brew the invention of high-fructose corn syrup and hydrogenated oils (to replace saturated fat) and you had the perfect dietary storm.

You see, if you're a food manufacturer and you're removing the fat from some food, you need to replace it with something else or it won't taste very good. So, we wound up with a slew of low-fat products loaded with sugar. And since high-fructose corn syrup was now available cheaply, adding sweetness was an easy thing to do.

So easy, in fact, that high-fructose corn



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syrup started showing up in hundreds — if not thousands — of food products.

At the same time as all of this was happening, American started eating more of everything. This, too, is no coincidence. Here's why: If I give you a carton of Domino's sugar and tell you to eat till your heart's content, you won't consume very much. Same thing with butter. But if I put them together, something magical happens. Combine sugar and fat and every one of your evolutionary buttons are pushed. Manufacturers know this. Cravings get activated, brain chemistry starts firing, you can literally eat this stuff 'till you bust.

And we did.

The whole low-fat movement coincided with a huge spike in food processing and those who process and manufacture food products for a living have one goal — getting people to eat more of their products. That's easy to do — just engineer combinations of sugar and a bit of fat, which worked really well with the whole "low-fat" philosophy.

As long as it didn't have too much fat, you could eat it, right?

Meanwhile, fat — the one macronutrient that keeps you full and satisfied — was lacking from most of what we were eating. Sugar, the one element that keeps cravings going, was plentiful. Portion sizes in general collectively took a shot of steroids, as the whole country decided that super sizing was its birthright.

Low fat has a lot to answer for. It may not be the only reason we're experiencing one of the worst health epidemics in modern times, but it sure is one of the biggest.

Want to ditch the low-fat foods? Then learn how to eat healthy and distinguish serving versus portion size.

For more information from Jonny, visit his website.

*Jonny Bowden, author, nutritionist and weight loss coach cuts through all the misconceptions about diet and fitness to help you transform your body, your health and your life.*