

Food Facts

**Call it fast food, snack food or even junk food - North Americans love it!
Here are some interesting facts about junk food.**

- In the United States, the food industry spends more than \$33 billion a year to advertise products that are mostly loaded with fat, salt and sugar.
- Of that, \$12 billion a year is spent on marketing to youth.
- According to a 2007 Kaiser Family Foundation study, children aged 8 to 12 viewed an average of 21 food ads a day.
- Of those, 34 per cent were for candy or snacks, 28 per cent for cereal and 10 per cent for fast food.
- None were for fruits or vegetables.
- The American National Cancer Institute spends \$1 million per year to encourage people to eat fruits and vegetables.
- According to the Canadian Paediatric Society, most food advertising on children's TV shows is for fast foods, soft drinks, candy and pre-sweetened cereals - while commercials for healthful food make up only 4 per cent of those shown.
- Unhealthful foods make up much of online advertising as well. The Kaiser Family Foundation studied 77 Web sites promoting food products to children and found that over three months they received more than 12 million visits from children aged 2 to 11.
- Every month, more than 90 per cent of the children in the United States eat at McDonald's.
- Over the past twenty-five years, American researchers have found an increase in fast-food commercials during children's television programming - with many of these commercials emphasizing larger portions.
- During the 1950s, the typical soft drink order at a fast food restaurant contained about eight ounces of soda. Today, a "child" order of Coke at McDonald's is twelve ounces, and a large Coke is thirty-two ounces (and about 310 calories!).
- Fast food companies make higher profits on soft drinks than on their food products.
- In 1997, Americans spent over \$54 billion on soft drinks.
- Twelve- to nineteen-year-old boys drink an average of 868 cans of pop per year. Girls drink about one-fourth less - around 651 cans per year.
- A super-sized order of McDonald's fries contains 610 calories and 29 grams of fat. Other brands aren't much better: a king-sized order of Burger King's fries packs 590 calories and 30 grams of fat.
- Per ounce, Chicken McNuggets contain twice as much fat as hamburger.



- In the United States, obesity is second only to smoking as a cause of death.
- 34 per cent of American adults are obese, and 14 per cent of children aged 2 to 5 are overweight.
- In Canada, 46 per cent of adults are overweight or obese. Over the past twenty years, obesity rates for Canadian kids have tripled.
- McDonald's is the largest owner of private playgrounds in North America.
- A Stanford University study showed that when children aged 3 to 5 were offered two identical meals, one wrapped in plain paper and one in MacDonal'd's packaging, children preferred the latter, insisting that it tasted better.
- The American artificial flavour industry - the industry that's behind the great taste of much of the snack food we consume - has annual revenues of approximately \$1.4 billion.
- And speaking of artificial flavouring - a typical strawberry milkshake contains approximately fifty artificial ingredients to create that great "strawberry" taste!

Sources:

Nutrition Action, December 2000, <http://www.cspinet.org/nah/12_00/cspinews.htm>.

Center for Science in the Public Interest.

Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001.

"Watch what we eat? We eat what we watch." Cathleen F. Crowley, Albany Times Union, July 24, 2008.

