

OTHER CAUSES OF

OBESITY

Poor diet and lack of exercise are well-known causes of obesity. But what about the amount of sleep a person receives, or even exposure to air conditioning? These may also be important, according to a recent article published in the *International Journal of Obesity*. David B. Allison, Ph.D., professor of biostatistics in the School of Public Health, and colleagues reviewed several studies on food marketing practices and institutionally driven reductions in physical activity and their impact on increases in obesity rates. They found that the data are far from conclusive. "Obesity has increased across the board, and changes in age, race, sex, and smoking status of the population cannot completely account for the epidemic," Allison says. This paper introduces 10 hypotheses regarding factors that may affect body fat and contribute to the rise of the obesity, including:

- * *Less sleep;*
- * *Endocrine disruptors, including DDT and PCBs;*
- * *Keeping homes and offices at one temperature year-round;*
- * *Smoking cessation, which increases weight due to nicotine's thermogenic and appetite-suppressant effects;*
- * *Certain pharmaceuticals, including antipsychotics, antidepressants, contraceptives, and antihistamines;*
- * *Prevalence of obesity among some ethnic and age groups;*
- * *Higher risk of obese offspring among older mothers;*
- * *Intergenerational influences acting in utero, i.e., "fetally driven positive feedback loop;"*
- * *People with a greater genetic predisposition toward obesity having more offspring;*
- * *People selecting mates similar to themselves in body weight which increases the frequency of offspring who have two obese parents, putting them at high risk for obesity.*

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