



## **YOUR ZIP CODE COULD IMPACT YOUR HEALTH MORE THAN YOUR GENETIC CODE**

Health can be an intimidating topic—and a personal one, too. There are so many factors that can affect an individual’s health. Some, such as age and genetics, can’t be changed. That makes it a sensitive subject, especially when one’s health is negatively impacted by those factors. But, some factors, such as lifestyle and surroundings, can be changed.

Did you know your surroundings—your ZIP code—might have a bigger impact on your health than your genetic code?

It’s true. Some of the most common health issues, like obesity, are impacted by our surroundings. Americans are experiencing more chronic health issues and are more overweight than ever before. Thirty years ago obese adults made up less than 15 percent of the population. Today, 2 out of 3 adults are overweight or obese.

So, why do our waistbands continue to get bigger?

Well, we consume what’s convenient. Items like soda and potato chips are in every convenience store, vending machine and checkout lane, and fruits and veggies are scarce. More than 75 percent of kids don’t eat green vegetables daily.

Americans consume 600 more calories per day than they did in 1970<sup>1</sup>. That’s equivalent to an extra lunch. We also eat 30 percent more added sugar,<sup>2</sup> which is, in part, due to increased portion sizes.<sup>3</sup> And, since 1960 our plate sizes have gotten 36 percent bigger.

In addition to our changing eating habits, we move less. Transportation systems are designed for cars instead of people, resulting in communities’ reduced walkability. U.S. adults walk less than 5,000 steps a

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. “Loss-Adjusted Food Availability: Spreadsheets—Calories.”

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.obesity.org/news/press-releases/us-adult>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/portion/documents/PD2.pdf>

day<sup>4</sup>. And, the number of kids who walk to school declined from 48 percent in 1969 to 16 percent in 2011<sup>5</sup>.

Even the social connections we make are often virtual, rather than face-to-face. Adults spend more than 10 hours a day on screen time<sup>6</sup> and kids spend more than six hours a day<sup>7</sup>, which also leads to decreased physical activity.

But, there's a solution to these problems. And, they start right here in Clear Lake, SD. A community can't change habits, but it can be a guide to better ones. Small changes like creating biking and walking paths and establishing community gardens, are just a couple ways to reduce these issues, and that's exactly what we are doing.

When we band together to make healthier choices easier, the results are enormous.

Learn how you can get involved in making the healthy choice the easy choice by contacting your local Healthy Hometown Committee.

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<sup>4</sup> Hedley, Odgen, Johnson, et al. "Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity among U.S. Children Adolescents and Adults; 1999 – 2002."

<sup>5</sup> McDonald NC. "Active Transportation to School: Trends among U.S. Schoolchildren 1969 – 2001." American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 32 (6): 509 – 16, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/30/health/americans-screen-time-nielsen/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000355.htm>