

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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After browsing the Iowa State University Extension's homepage, I came across the following article. It discussed how sedentary our lifestyles are becoming for a variety of reasons. I hope you find the following article interesting and useful.

Buried in the 1,300 pages of tables and statistics of The U.S. Census Bureau's most recent "Statistical Abstract of the United States" is evidence that helps explain why approximately two-thirds of Americans are overweight, including one-third who are obese.

"It's no secret that obesity numbers have risen steadily over the last 10 years," said Ruth Litchfield, Iowa State University Extension nutrition specialist.

In 1995, the number of obese in each of the 50 states was less than 20 percent of the state's population. Only 28 states had obesity prevalence rates less than 20 percent in 2000. The most recent data for 2005 shows only four states with less than 20 percent of their population as obese, while 17 states reported that one-fourth or more of their population is obese. In addition, three states (Louisiana, Mississippi and West Virginia) reported an obesity prevalence rate equal to or greater than 30 percent in 2005.

"However, what this report also does is remind us that the weight equation has two sides: calories in and calories out," Litchfield said. "And it provides data for both sides of the equation."

For example, the U.S. Census bureau data indicate that Americans drink a significant number of their calories. Americans drink about a gallon of soda a week along with a half gallon each of milk, bottled water, coffee and beer. One gallon of soft drink per week alone contributes approximately 2000 calories – more than half the amount required to gain one pound of fat.

"At that rate, it's easy to gain a couple pounds a month," Litchfield said. "That's especially true for the average American who spends nearly 10 hours a day in such sedentary activities as watching television, surfing the Internet, reading books, newspapers and magazines and listening to music, according to Census Bureau data."

Some might say that technology has helped make Americans addicted to a sedentary lifestyle.

"If that's true, then the first step toward breaking that addiction is becoming aware of our real level of physical activity," Litchfield said. "The second step is realizing that any activity is better than no activity. And a third step might be finding someone to help you activate your lifestyle."

One resource that has helped more than 70,000 Iowans is Lighten Up Iowa. To learn more, see <http://www.lightenupiowa.org>.

I would encourage you to take advantage of spring's arrival and plan activities such as walking, sports or gardening to reduce the amount of time of being sedentary. If you would like more information, please contact the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979. So, after you have finished this article and are through reading the newspaper set it down and go out for a walk.

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