

# GROWING UP TODAY STUDY UPDATE

SPRING/SUMMER 2004

## INSIDE

**Then & Now** ..... 1  
Surprising changes since GUTS began

**Serving Size on the Rise** ..... 2  
Why bigger isn't necessarily better

**Recent Research from GUTS** ..... 3  
See your answers in action

**What is BMI?** ..... 3  
How you can use this helpful tool

**Feedback Forum** ..... 4  
Responses to some of your latest inquiries

**Researcher Close-Up** ..... 4  
Focus on two GUTS researchers

Dear GUTS participant,

Thanks for being part of GUTS! Your participation is helping future generations of young people.

Ever wonder, "Why am I filling these things out, anyway?" This newsletter gives us a great opportunity to update you on the study so you can see for yourself the outcome of your participation. Inside are findings from the GUTS survey including summaries of actual scientific papers based on GUTS data.

If you didn't have a chance to fill out the latest survey, another copy will be in the mail soon or fill it out online at [www.gutsweb.org](http://www.gutsweb.org). If you didn't receive a survey, have a new email or street address, or have any comments about the study, please email us at [guts@channing.harvard.edu](mailto:guts@channing.harvard.edu).

## THEN & NOW

One purpose of GUTS is to see how information changes over time. In the next couple of pages we'll show you how some of the statistics from GUTS have changed. We'll also include a few general facts we think you might find interesting. For instance, most GUTS participants were born around 1983. Look how technology has changed just in your lifetime!

**1983**

**\$9,995**

the cost of the LISA™ computer  
released by Apple in 1983

**2004**

**\$499**

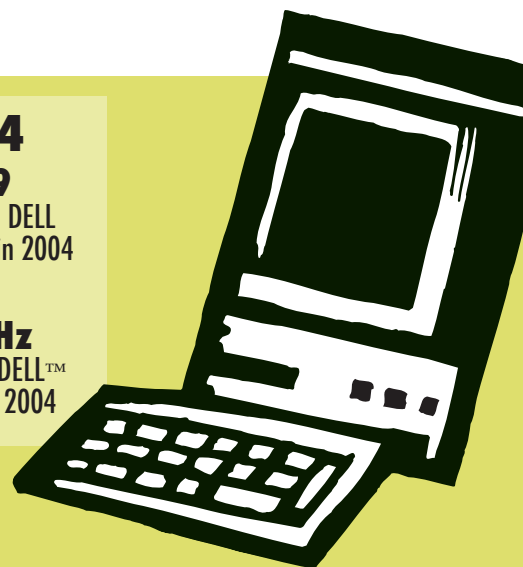
the cost of a DELL  
Dimension™ in 2004

**5mhz**

the size of the LISA™ computer  
processor in 1983

**2.4 GHz**

the size of a DELL™  
processor in 2004



**GROWING UP TODAY STUDY**  
Harvard Medical School  
Channing Laboratory  
181 Longwood Avenue  
Boston, MA 02115-5804

Nonprofit Organization  
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Harvard Medical  
School

# SERVING SIZE ON THE RISE

**Y**ou may be surprised to see just how much serving sizes have grown over time. When these already large servings get “supersized” at a fast food restaurant, you could be getting an entire day’s worth of calories in one meal! GUTS statistics show that about a quarter of young men are eating at fast food restaurants two to four times a week, while the same percentage of young women are eating there at least once a week, which makes this a real consideration for GUTS members when you’re waiting in line to order.

## Yesterday’s “large” is today’s “small”

Serving sizes have been getting bigger since 1977 and increased dramatically in the 1980s. For example, in the 1950s McDonald’s™ only offered one size of french fries; that same size is today considered a “small.” In 2001, the “large” french fry

at McDonald’s™ was the “supersize” of just three years before, and the new, larger “supersize” was an ounce more than that.

## We eat what’s in front of us.

When participants in a recent study were given larger portions of macaroni and cheese, they ate significantly more than when they were given smaller portions, even though the rates of fullness and hunger did not vary.

## Bigger isn’t better when it comes to our health.

Larger portion size often seems like a bargain since it costs less per ounce, but the real cost to you could be the extra weight you gain and the cost of taking it off. What you’re saving in cash, you’re losing in health.

## Wield power over your portions.

Luckily, all the major fast food restaurants have websites that make it easy to create a meal you might order and then calculate its caloric content. McDonald’s™ even plans to eliminate super-sizing and is offering new healthier choices to their menu. Being aware of the

calories in your food allows you to make informed choices about what you eat and how much you want to order when you eat out.

# GUTS FACT:

In the past year, how often did you eat something from a fast food restaurant?

Never or less than once a month:

**15%**

1 to 3 times a month:

**37%**

Once a week:

**26%**

2 to 4 times a week:

**18%**

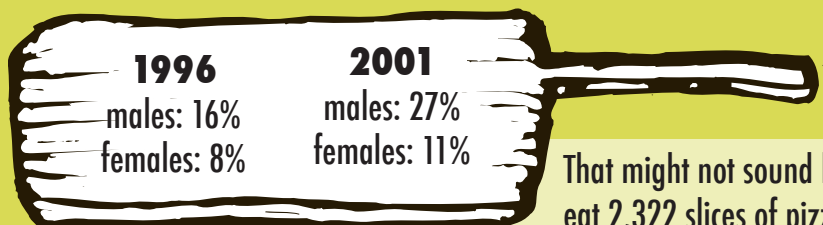
5 to 6 times a week:

**2%**

At least once a day:

**<1%**

# GUTS: THEN & NOW



Hours a day that GUTS participants watched tv

**1996**  
males: 2.7  
females: 2.5

**2001**  
males: 1.0  
females: 0.8

That might not sound like a lot, but it means GUTS participants eat 2,322 slices of pizza per day! It is estimated that Americans eat 100 acres of pizza a day or 350 slices a second!

# RECENT RESEARCH FROM GUTS

Here are some brief summaries of recent scientific papers that have come out of GUTS.

## The “Boomerang” Effect of Dieting

Many adolescents and young adults are taking active steps to keep their weight in check, but it remains to be seen what weight loss strategy is most effective. When GUTS started, as many as 1 in 4 participants were dieting, and that percentage has increased every year. A carefully supervised diet may be beneficial for weight loss in the short term, but we have found that dieters actually gain more weight annually than non-dieters and are at least 9 times more likely than non-dieters to binge eat. Making moderate diet changes that can be sustained over time along with increasing physical activity is probably more effective than any restrictive diet in controlling your weight. (Field AE et al. Pediatrics 2003 Oct; 112(4); pages 900-6.)

## Skin Care and Sunburns

Recent information from GUTS has shown that recommendations about sun protection may not be inspiring kids and adolescents to use sunscreen and stay away from tanning beds. Data from the study show that only 34% of participants use sunscreen regularly, while over 80% had at least one sunburn the previous summer. Although young women were more likely than young men to use sunscreen, they were also more likely to use tanning beds, particularly in the oldest age groups. These

findings are important since sun exposure in early life, particularly sunburns, can increase the risk of melanoma and other types of skin cancer. (Geller AC et al. Pediatrics 2002 Jun; 109(6): pages 1009-14.)

## Watching What You Drink

Watching what you eat is important, but watching what you drink may be just as crucial in weight maintenance. A recent paper from GUTS has found that consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, such as non-diet soda and fruit drinks, was associated with increased body mass index or “BMI” (see explanation below). What’s more, BMI went up as consumption increased over the years. The reason for this may be as simple as the fact that that these drinks can contain a lot of calories and could contribute significantly to the overall amount of calories consumed in the course of a normal day. (Berkey CS et al. In press.)

## WHAT IS BMI?

Body mass index (BMI) is a tool to assess a person’s weight status. It is used to estimate body fat, but a high BMI doesn’t necessarily mean a person has excess fat. People with a lot of muscle may have a high BMI but low body fat.

Calculating your own BMI isn’t as hard as it looks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have created a handy BMI calculator on their website at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/calc-bmi.htm>, where you can also find out more about how BMI is used as well as its shortcomings as an evaluation tool.

Or you can figure it out yourself using this simple formula:

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{your weight in pounds}}{(\text{your height in inches})^2} \times 703$$

BMI	WEIGHT STATUS
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 - 24.9	Normal
25 - 29.9	Overweight
30 and above	Obese

## Percentage of GUTS participants that slept fewer than 7 hours (on average) each night

1999	2001
males: 10%	males: 23%
females: 17%	females: 29%

## Percentage of GUTS participants that drank soda at least twice a week

1996	2000
males: 49%	males: 75%
females: 48%	females: 59%



# FEEDBACK FORUM

We want you to know we read all your comments and consider them when we are designing the GUTS questionnaire. Here are some responses to comments that we have already received back from the most recent survey.

*Now that some of us are getting old enough for marriage and kids, it would be neat to look at that angle (fears, parenting style, independence).*

We are always open to your suggestions for new questions. In response to suggestions from GUTS participants, we did add a question on marital status this year. We realize that you are getting older and some of you have gotten married and started a family. You can look forward to new questions that address your changing lives in future questionnaires.

*I'm a competitive cross country ski racer and so many of these questions are hard to answer. For example, I "binge eat" after long days of training and am constantly consuming as much food as possible to give my body the food it needs.*

We appreciate your concern that we might be misinterpreting your response. Eating a lot because one needs the energy to play a sport is very different from overeating. One reason we ask the follow-up questions about feeling "out of control" and "eating until your stomach hurts" is to separate people, like yourself, who may be eating a lot because they are in training from people who really do binge eat.

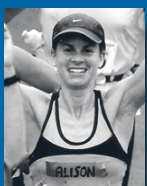
*It would be great to see results published about women who have participated who are now in college. It would be interesting to see where lifestyle habits as teens have gotten them in adulthood.*

Wanting to see more results from the study is the most frequent comment we receive from GUTS members. That's why we published some recent research in this newsletter. What makes GUTS so unique is that we are the largest study in the country that has followed a group of young people every one to two years as they matured from children to adolescents to adults. We are now trying to understand how lifestyle habits change over time.

*Thanks for the phone card! It will be put to great use! Also, do you ever send us anything via email?*

We actually selected the phone card that accompanied the first mailing of this year's questionnaire through an email survey we sent out to a group of GUTS participants. Make sure we have your correct email address by sending us an email at [guts@channing.harvard.edu](mailto:guts@channing.harvard.edu). We also send out emails when GUTS research is featured in publications like *USA Today* and the *New York Times* so you can go to their websites and check it out for yourself. Remember, anytime you have comments about the study, feel free to email us and let us know.

## RESEARCHER CLOSE-UP



**Alison Field**

**Hometown:** San Francisco, California

**Favorite Food:** Risotto

**School:** University of California, Berkeley (BA) and Harvard School of Public Health (ScD)

**Hobbies:** Running marathons (I ran the Boston and Marine Corps Marathons last year)

**Research Interests:**

My research focuses on the causes, consequences, and course of overweight, weight gain, weight concerns, and disordered eating among children, adolescents, and young adults.



**Carlos Camargo**

**Hometown:** Palo Alto, California

**Favorite Food:** Pizza

**School:** Stanford University (BA), University of California, San Francisco (MD) and Harvard University (DrPH)

**Hobbies:** Windsurfing and traveling

**Research Interests:**

I work clinically as an emergency physician and currently serve as President of the American College of Epidemiology. I began my research career studying health effects of moderate alcohol consumption, but my primary area of interest now is asthma and smoking-related lung disease.