

“THE ‘BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE’ OF FAST FOOD”

FOX NEWS

SUPER SIZE MIE

M 15+
RECOMMENDED FOR MATURE
AUDIENCES 15 YEARS AND OVER
MATURE THEMES, SEXUAL REFERENCES,
LIME-LIGHT, COARSE LANGUAGE



A Film of Epic Portions

WINNER - BEST DIRECTOR - SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL 2004

PENNIE STOYLES

STUDYGUIDE

Super Size Me is a documentary that could serve as a springboard to discussion on fast food, nutrition, food advertising and obesity rates in children. It could also be a useful learning tool for encouraging students to examine their own eating habits and societal changes taking place with regard to food production and consumption and the roles and responsibilities of large fast food corporations.



The film is suitable for teachers of middle to senior secondary students in English, Science (Biological sciences), Health and Physical Education (Health of individuals and populations) and Studies of Society and Environment and Media.

Super Size Me

Why are westerners so fat? Find out in *Super Size Me*, a tongue-in-cheek and burger-in-hand look at the legal, financial and physical costs of America's hunger for fast food.

Disturbingly, thirty-seven per cent of American children and

adolescents are carrying too much fat and two out of every three adults are overweight or obese. Is it their fault for lacking self-control, or are the fast food corporations to blame?

Filmmaker Morgan Spurlock hit the road and interviewed experts in twenty US cities, including Houston, the 'Fattest City' in America. From Surgeon Generals to gym teachers, cooks to kids, lawmakers to legislators, these authorities shared their research, opinions and 'gut feelings' on America's ever-expanding girth.

During the journey, Spurlock also put his own body on the line, living on nothing but McDonald's for an entire month with three simple rules:

- 1 No options: he could only eat what was available over the counter (water included!);
- 2 No supersizing unless offered;
- 3 No excuses: he had to eat every item on the menu at least once.

It all adds up to a fat food bill, harrowing visits to the doctor, and compelling viewing for anyone who's ever wondered if man could live on fast food alone.

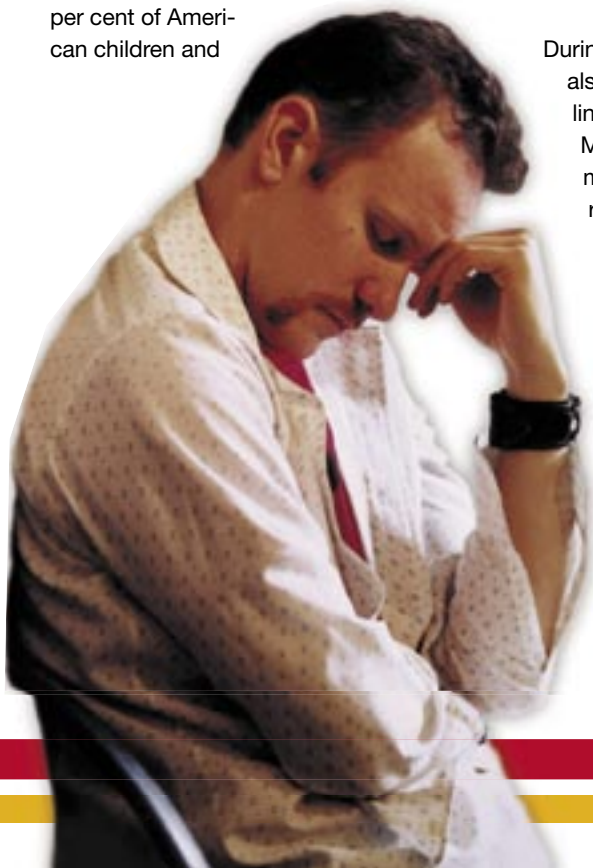
The film explores the horror of school lunch programs, declining health and physical education classes, food addictions and the extreme measures people take to lose weight and regain their health.

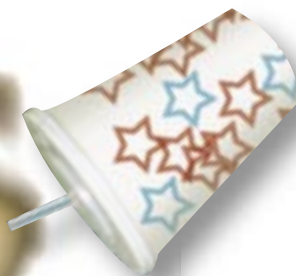
Super Size Me takes a satirical jab at the billion-dollar fast food industry which has been besieged by doctors, lawyers and nutritionists alike. 'Would you like fries with that?' will never sound the same again!

www.supersizeme.com

Before you watch the film:

- 1 Ask friends and family about their fast food eating habits.
 - a What is fast food?
 - b Where do you buy fast food?
 - c How often do you eat fast food?
 - d How often do you think you should eat it?
 - e What is your favourite food and drink?
- 2 Look at the key words below and discuss the meanings with your teacher or your classmates:





The following American terms are used in the film. What terms would we use in Australia to mean the same thing?

gas station / soda / quart / candy /
cookie / griddle / ketchup

Buzz Words

The following words are used in the documentary: 'supersize', 'junk food', 'McFrankenstein' and 'fast food'. Discuss with your classmates what you think they mean.

There are other words and phrases that have developed to describe aspects of the current generation, such as 'couch potato'. What does this mean? Can you think of other examples?

obese • binge • diet • calorie • vegan •
organic • epidemic • nutrition • indulge
• senses • toxic • law suit • overweight
• preventable • processed • addiction •
blood pressure • lobbyist

Key scientific words:

diabetes • cholesterol • cardiologist
• BMI (body mass index) • gastroenterologist
• dietician • triglycerides •
kilojoule

- 3 The following issues are raised in the film. Discuss what you think the film is going to show you.
- The balance between corporate and personal responsibility for the food we eat.
 - The effect of advertising and brand imprinting on young children.
 - School canteens and the foods they serve.
 - How children's exercise patterns have changed since the last generation.

After you watch the film

Americanisms

This film was produced in the USA and uses units of measurement and

language that are different from what we use in Australia. The US still uses the imperial system of measurement whereas Australia switched to the metric system in the 1970s.

Go to a text book, dictionary or web site and convert the following measurement units:

<http://www.convert-me.com/en/>

Mass: one pound = ... kilograms (kg)
Length: one inch = ... centimetres (cm)
Volume: one fluid ounce = ... millilitres (mL)
One US gallon = ... litres (L)
Energy: one calorie = ... kilojoules (kJ)

- Morgan Spurlock began the month weighing 185.5 pounds and finished weighing 210 pounds. Convert these two measurements to kilograms and calculate his weight gain in kilograms.
- A half-gallon soda from 7-eleven contains forty-eight teaspoons of sugar. What is this volume in litres?
- The dietician stated that Morgan should be consuming 2500 calories per day. How many kilojoules is this?



Overweight and Obese

This documentary uses the terms overweight and obese. What do you think these two words mean? Look up the meanings of these two terms in a dictionary.

The scientific definition of the two terms relies on a calculation called body mass index (BMI). BMI equals weight in kilograms divided by height in metres squared.

$\text{Weight in kg} \div (\text{Height in m})^2 = \text{BMI}$

In Australia, the accepted definitions of weight categories for adults (over eighteen years) using BMI are (see table 01 on following page):

Calculate your BMI using the above equation.

*Note that for children under eighteen, the figures differ slightly and males and females have different classifications. Use these figures as a rough guide only.



The way we eat now

At the beginning of the film, the filmmaker shows images of his mother cooking in the kitchen and contrasts these with images of people eating in fast food restaurants.

Discuss

- 1 What do these images suggest about America's eating habits?
- 2 Do you think the same is true in Australia?



- 3 How often do you and your family eat a home cooked meal at the dining table?
- 4 How often do you and your family eat take-away food at home?
- 5 Do you think that some take-away foods are healthier than others?
- 6 How often do you and your family eat at a fast food restaurant?
- 7 Ask your parents questions three to six about their childhood. How have eating habits changed?

- 8 Do you think the role of the kitchen has changed in households through the generations?
- 9 Discuss the cost of fast food compared with food prepared at home.

What is in your food?

In the law suit against them, McDonald's stated in its own defence that it's a matter of common knowledge that any processing its foods undergo, serves to make them more harmful than unprocessed food.

Unprocessed foods have had very little done to them. A raw apple is unprocessed, but if you cut the apple up, add sugar to it, wrap it in pastry and cook it, you have an apple pie that is a processed food. When you make an apple pie at home, you know what ingredients you have used. When you buy an apple pie at the supermarket, the ingredients must be listed so you know what you are buying. By law the labels must contain a list of ingredients from greatest to smallest by weight (with the percentage of the key ingredient), warnings about the pres-

ence of major allergens, a nutrition information panel and a use-by date. Some very small packages are exempted from showing nutrition information.

Many of the ingredients in processed food are called Food Additives. They are added in small amounts and have a specific use. They are listed by showing their function and either their chemical name or a code number.

The types of food additives are:

Colours: restore colour lost during processing.

Preservatives: prolong shelf life by controlling growth of bacteria and fungi.

Antioxidants: prevent foods containing fats and oils from going off (rancid).

Food Acids: maintain acid levels in a food where there are variations in a product's acidity.

TABLE 01

	Adults	14-year-old females	14-year-old males
Underweight	less than 18.5		
Healthy Weight	18.5 - 24.9		
Overweight	25.0 - 29.9	23.3 – 28.5	22.6 – 27.5
Obese	greater than 30.0	greater than 28.6	Greater than 27.6

Thickeners: change the texture and consistency of food.

Humectants: control moisture levels as they absorb and keep foods moist.

Flavour enhancers: bring out the flavours.

Activity: Reading food labels

What you need:

- two or three different processed foods (e.g. breakfast bar, chocolate bar, frozen dinner, pasta sauce, packet of biscuits)
- Food additive code breaker book or access to http://www.food-standards.gov.au/_srcfiles/new_numeric_list_0902.pdf

A basic recipe book

Look at the list of ingredients on each of the packages. Fill in Table 02 by naming the product in column A, write in the first ingredient in column B, write the name and percentage of the first ingredient that shows a percentage as well as its position in the Ingredients list in column C, list all the classes of food additive (see above) in column D, and finally count up all the different ingredients and show how many there are in column E.

Answer the following questions about the food you chose and then compare your answers with those of your classmates.

- Is the ingredient listed first (the highest percentage) always the key ingredient?
- Look up the codes of the food additives in the food additive code breaker and list them. Then find out how many of these additives might be used in cooking at home.
- Find a recipe for apple pie. List



the ingredients. Then find out the ingredients in an apple filled breakfast bar. Compare the differences and discuss your findings with the class.

Energy in food

We eat food for enjoyment and to keep us alive. We need food for energy as well as to give us the raw materials to grow and repair our bodies.

Foods often have nutrition information on their labels. This will include the amount of energy measured in kilojoules (kJ). Processed foods such as potato chips usually contain far more energy than the unprocessed potatoes that they come from. Most of the food that you can buy at fast food outlets is highly processed and often contains large amounts of fat and sugar. A high intake of processed food is believed to be one of the causes of childhood obesity.



Energy comparisons

What you need:

- Calculator
- Access to the McDonald's web site at www.mcdonalds.com.au

What to do:

Go to the McDonald's Australia web site and click on the nutrition calculator. Under the heading 'Our menu' click on one of the choices (e.g. fries and nuggets). Then click and drag a menu choice onto the tray. Fill in the name of the menu choice in column A of the table. Pick one menu choice from each heading.

Read off the kilojoules and fat content and write them into columns B and C of Table 03 (see overleaf).

Twenty minutes of leisurely walking burns up approximately 336 kJ of energy. Work out how many minutes of walking would burn up the energy in one serve of each food. Do this by multiplying the energy per serve (column D) by twenty then dividing the answer by 336. Write your answer in column E.

Use the nutrition calculator to find the answers to these questions.

(Hint: Drag the menu items onto the tray then click 'nutritional breakdown' to get a comparison table.)

- Which item contains more sugar: a Berrynice yoghurt crunch or a strawberry sundae?
- How many grams of sugar are in a large coke?

TABLE 02

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E
Name of food	first (highest percentage) ingredient	percentage and rank of key ingredient	Different types of food additives	number of ingredients

TABLE 03

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column E
Menu choice	Energy. kJ per serve	Fat per serving (g)	Minutes of walking per serve
Apple (raw)	243	0	
Medium coke			



- Which burger contains the most kilojoules?
- How many red apples would you have to eat to get the same number of kilojoules as a Big Mac?

Your energy requirements

People require different amounts of energy to survive each day. Your energy requirements depend on your age, your sex and your level of physical activity. If your energy input is greater than your energy requirements, you store the extra energy as fat.

What you need:

- Access to the web site <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/diet/n6p4.htm>
- A calculator
- A packet from one of your favourite snack foods

What you do:

Use the information provided by the

National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC) to calculate your daily energy requirements.

Pick one of the foods listed at the McDonald's web site in the previous activity and work out how many serves would meet your daily requirements.

Look at the nutrition label on your favourite snack food packet. Work out how many serves would meet your daily requirements. Compare this with the McDonald's result.

Discuss reasons for eating more than one type of food every day.

Canteen food

Nutritionists in Australia have recently called for better food in school canteens.

Nutrition Australia's Ingrid Phyland is quoted as saying that school canteens could run successfully after removing junk food from their menus. She supported new rules in NSW that from 2005 will ban high fat and high sugar items from being sold more than twice a term. A former office bearer in Victoria's division of Nutrition Australia said that many canteens were reluctant to remove junk food from their menus because they were money spinners.

The Victorian Education Department provides schools with lists of foods that are recommended and not recommended:

Recommended foods

- Sandwiches and rolls with salad, lean meats, cheese, hummus or chutney
- Muffins, scones and fruit loaf
- Pasta, rice and noodles
- Baked beans and bean salad
- Omelettes and hard boiled eggs
- Salad tubs
- Baked potatoes and corn on the cob
- Fruits including cantaloupe, water melon, mandarins, apricots, figs and mangoes
- Yoghurt drinks and fruit smoothies

Not recommended foods

- Hot chips
- Hamburgers
- Fish and chips
- Pies
- Fried dim sims
- Crisps
- Cream cakes
- Ice cream
- Sweets and lollies



Source: *Herald Sun*, May 9 2004

Find out about:

- the number of foods recommended on the list above that are sold in your school canteen.
- the number of foods not recommended that are sold in your school canteen.
- your school's canteen policy (including who runs it and where any profits go).

Survey the class and find out:

- How many students rely on the school canteen for lunches every day?
- What percentage of the class buys snacks at the school canteen and how often?
- What is the most popular food item at the canteen?
- How many students would be happy if the canteen only sold items on the recommended list?

Discuss the following with your classmates:

- Do you think the government should regulate what is sold in school canteens?
- If profits from the canteen benefit the school community, should the canteen sell whatever is most popular with the students and/or whatever gives the highest profit?

Soft drink and diet soft drink

The density of water is one gram per cubic centimetre (or millilitre). This means that one millilitre of water weighs one gram. When you dissolve sugar in water the density increases.

A regular sized can of soft drink (375ml) contains about six teaspoons of sugar. The diet version of the same soft drink contains no sugar. Instead it contains a chemical sweetener such as aspartame or cyclamate. Chemical sweeteners are very concentrated so just a few drops will provide the same sweetness as six teaspoons of sugar, but none of the energy.

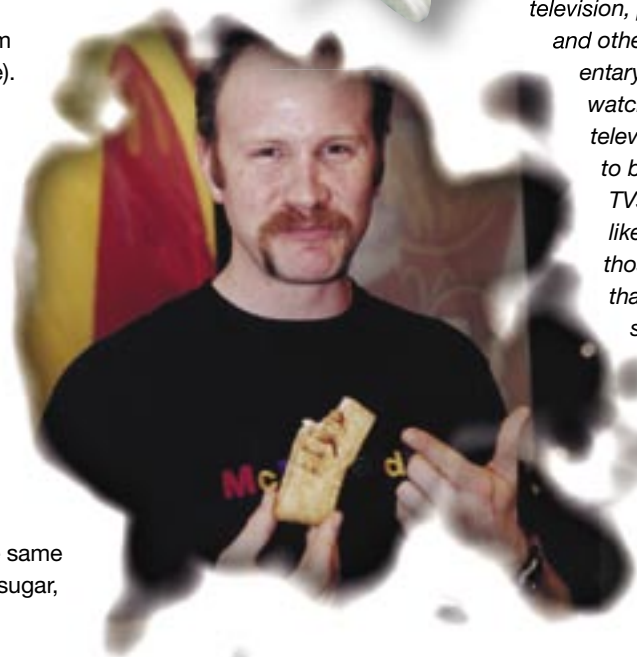
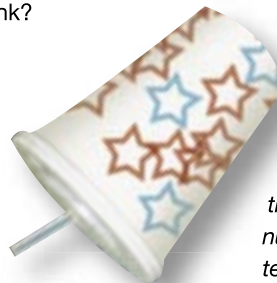
What you need:

- A can of soft drink and a can of the diet version of the same soft drink
- Kitchen scales
- A large tub of water

What you do:

- weigh the can of 'regular' soft drink and record its mass.
- weigh the diet soft drink can and record its mass.
- what is the difference?
- Calculate the difference in density of each soft drink by dividing the mass (in grams) by the volume (in millilitres).
- Substances that are more dense than water will sink in water and substances that are less dense than water will float. Try floating both cans in a tub or bucket of water. (Be careful not to trap any air bubbles under the cans.) Describe what happens.

If a 375 ml can of soft drink contains about six teaspoons of sugar, how many teaspoons of sugar are in a litre of soft drink?



Childhood Obesity

Read the following extract on childhood obesity from the Better Health Channel—Obesity in Children & Excess Body Fat web site.

<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>

Between 1985 and 1995 the prevalence of overweight children aged 7-15 almost doubled and the prevalence of obesity in this age group more than tripled ... It is thought that genes are responsible for between 25-40 per cent of all cases of obesity, while the rest is largely determined by environmental factors. However, as both genetic and environmental factors appear to play a role in the development of obesity, it is difficult to contribute obesity to just one factor. The most immediate consequences of being overweight during childhood and adolescence are psychosocial. Obese children have low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. They are also more likely to: do less well academically, have poor job prospects, be socially isolated ... Research shows that obese children feel that being overweight is a worse disability than losing a limb.

... Children are much less active these days. This may be linked to the number of hours they spend watching television, playing computer games and other electronic-based sedentary activities. Children who watch more than 10 hours of television a week are more likely to be overweight. Children with TVs in their bedroom are more likely to be overweight than those without. Reports indicate that most young people aged seven and above are inactive and that girls are even less active than boys.

Some social factors, such as low income, and a low level of education, have also been linked to obesity.



Discuss

- 1 What might be the environmental factors that contribute to obesity?
- 2 Social factors such as low income and minimal education are also associated with obesity. What strategies could you develop to help people on a low income to eat better food and educate people about healthy eating?
- 3 Survey your parents and people of their generation to find out how physical activity has changed over the past twenty to thirty years.
- 4 Do you think that computers have contributed to the obesity epidemic?
- 5 Find out about the 'Walking School Bus' program. Discuss why such a program has been introduced. Go to <http://www.travelsmart.gov.au/schools/schools2.html>

Food Advertising

Read the following case summary:

In 2002, a New York consumer, Mr Caesar Barber, attempted to sue four major fast food chains for causing him several health problems. Later in the year, his lawyer, Samuel Hirsch, sued fast food giant McDonald's America. His clients were eight teenagers aged between thirteen and nineteen years, who blamed McDonald's for causing their health problems that ranged from diabetes to coronary heart disease. Mr Hirsch claimed that McDonald's had misled impressionable children about the content of their products through aggressive advertising strategies. He also claimed that the company had not warned its consumers about the allegedly large amounts of fat, salt and sugar

in its food. Presently, in Australia it is obligatory to provide nutritional information on packaged foods.

Moreover, it is now obligatory for takeaway outlets and restaurants to provide the nutritional information if requested by any customer.

Source: Fast Food Legal Actions—Trials and Try www.ausfoodnews.com.au

Discuss:

- 1 Who is responsible for what you eat?
- 2 How much information do you like to know about what you're eating?

Research activity

Keep a record of food advertisements on TV between 4-6pm over a one-week period.

Product / Target audience / Images / Slogans / Number of times advertisements appear in one night / Your reaction

After one week, bring your findings to the class and discuss these questions:

- 1 Did the advertisements influence you or your friends to buy the product?
- 2 Did you compare your own life to the lives shown in the advertisements?
- 3 In what ways could these advertising strategies be used positively?

Changing your life style

Two men who have radically changed their lifestyles are featured in the film. One is Jared Fogle who lost 17.5 stone

or 111 kg by eating Subway for a year. Find out more and write about your opinion of his weight loss by going to <http://www.subway.co.uk/jared.html>

Try to find nutrition information about Subway and compare it with that found on the McDonald's web site. Work out how much it would cost a day to follow Jared's diet in Australia. Comment on the cost effectiveness by comparing it with other diet plans such as Weight Watchers or Jenny Craig.

John Robbins is the son of one of the founders of the Baskin Robbins Ice Cream Company. In the documentary he talks about his unhealthy upbringing as a child. He now heads an organization called 'The Food Revolution—how your diet can help save your life and the world'.

Go to <http://www.foodrevolution.org/> and explain, giving one or two examples, how:

- your diet can save your life
- your diet can save the world.

For educational sales of *Super Size Me* contact Ronin Films, PO Box 1005, Civic Square, ACT 2608
Ph: 02 6248 0851 Fax: 02 6249 1640

This study guide was produced by ATOM. For more information about ATOM study guides, The Speakers' Bureau or Screen Hub (the daily online film and television newsletter) visit our web site: www.metromagazine.com.au or email: damned@netspace.net.au

