Blacks Hurt More as Unemployment Incline Leads to Decline in Healthy Eating

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When money's tight, healthy eating gives way to the comforting taste of sweet, salty and fatty foods. About 4.5 million Americans are eating less-healthy food than they were a year ago, recent Gallup Poll results showed. What's more, rising unemployment is fueling this uptick in unhealthy eating and African Americans are the hardest hit, reported the Huffington Post.

The Gallup statistic reflects healthy-eating figures for June, based on a survey that polls at least 1,000 Americans each day about their health behaviors. Respondents were asked, for example, whether they "ate healthy food all day yesterday" and how many days of the week they consumed five or more servings of fruits and vegetables.

The results showed that Americans are not eating as many fruits and vegetables on a weekly basis as they were last year, and fewer respondents reported eating healthy foods.

The reason for the rise in unhealthy eating, according to researchers, is because many families have been forced to reduce spending during these difficult economic times. Indeed, U.S. Census data indicated that Americans spent less on all types of food in 2009 than they did in 2008—the latest years for which there is available data.

But spending less on food often means relying on fast-food restaurants that serve high-calorie, salty and sweet foods instead of high-quality, nutritious meals, which are often more expensive to buy and prepare.

"Foods with high calories tend to be cheaper," explains Adam Drewnowski, PhD, director of the Center for Obesity Research at Seattle's University of Washington. "It's really not irrational that a person with a tiny income is gong to be more concerned with feeling full than how many antioxidants that they get. If you want to feel full and not go hungry, you would logically focus on foods that give you the most calories per dollar, not nutrients per dollar."

But health experts say money saved in the present day may have to pay medical bills later. High-calorie, salty and sweet foods can cause obesity and increase a person's risk of diabetes, heart disease and other illnesses.

The crazy thing is these diseases are the very ones many health-conscious people were trying to avoid with a commitment to healthy eating.

Click here to read more about why calorie reduction is key for diabetics' weight loss.

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