



A Big Fat Crisis: The Hidden Forces Behind the Obesity Epidemic — and How We Can End It

M.D. Deborah Cohen

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Obesity is the public health crisis of the twenty-first century. Over 150 million Americans are overweight or obese, and across the globe an estimated 1.5 billion are affected. In *A Big Fat Crisis*, Dr. Deborah A. Cohen has created a major new work that will transform the conversation surrounding the modern weight crisis. Based on her own extensive research, as well as the latest insights from behavioral economics and cognitive science, Cohen reveals what drives the obesity epidemic and how we, as a nation, can overcome it.

Cohen argues that the massive increase in obesity is the product of two forces. One is the immutable aspect of human nature, namely the fundamental limits of self-control and the unconscious ways we are hard-wired to eat. And second is the completely transformed modern food environment, including lower prices, larger portion sizes, and the outsized influence of food advertising. We live in a food swamp, where food is cheap, ubiquitous, and insidiously marketed. This, rather than the much-discussed “food deserts,” is the source of the epidemic.

The conventional wisdom is that overeating is the expression of individual weakness and a lack of self-control. But that would mean that people in this country had more willpower thirty years ago, when the rate of obesity was half of what it is today! The truth is that our capacity for self-control has not shrunk; instead, the changing conditions of our modern world have pushed our limits to such an extent that more and more of us are simply no longer up to the challenge.

Ending this public health crisis will require solutions that transcend the advice found in diet books. Simply urging people to eat less sugar, salt, and fat has not worked. *A Big Fat Crisis* offers concrete recommendations and sweeping policy changes—including implementing smart and effective regulations and constructing a more balanced food environment—that represent nothing less than a blueprint for defeating the obesity epidemic once and for all.

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