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'Poor' diets prove healthier

BOSTON (AP) — Affluent Americans are eating more like poor people. And that's actually a good thing.

A major new review of U.S. eating habits shows a wholesale shift away from high-fat foods over the past 30 years. While this is hardly a surprise, the report shows that the change has meant a healthier diet for everyone.

Contrary to what many would assume, the study found that in 1965, poor blacks ate far better than well-off whites. Their diets included more grains and beans and less fat.

While differing tastes probably played a role, one reason was economic: Unlike the wealthy, the poor then simply could not afford to fill up on luxury foods like red meat and butter.

The researchers saw a 5 percent drop in fat consumption since the 1960s. Everyone's diet has changed, including poor blacks, who are eating less whole milk, red meat and bacon than ever before. However, the shift has affected them less than it has well-off whites or, for that matter, affluent blacks.

"Low-income blacks have always had a much better diet, so the changes have been less," said Dr. Anna Marie Siega-Riz, one of the researchers.

The study, directed by Dr. Barry M. Popkin of the University of North Carolina, was published in Thursday's issue of the New England Journal of Medicine.

Popkin said contrary to what some people believe, poor people don't stuff themselves with snack foods more than other people do. And his obesity rates among low-income people can be blamed on declines in physical activity rather than diet, he said.

The work, financed in part by Kellogg Corp., based on a review of U.S. Department of Agriculture surveys of 32,000 Americans between 1965 and 1991. People's diets were rated on a scale from zero to 100. The lower the number, the better the food. A healthy diet was considered to be a score of four or less.

In 1965, 16 percent of poor blacks scored below four, as did 9 percent of poor whites and 5 percent of well-off whites. By 1991, 24 percent of poor blacks scored in this healthy category. So did 20 percent of poor whites and 20 percent of wealthy whites.

"The dietary trends in Americans have been driven mainly by fat," Popkin said. "Everybody decreased their fat intake."

While few well-off blacks were counted in the surveys, in later years the surveys showed that poor diets are more like wealthy whites than poor blacks.

Health experts recommend that people eat plenty of grains and beans, and here the news is not entirely good.

The study found that while affluent whites increased their intake of these foods from four to six servings a day, consumption has actually declined among poor blacks — from six a day to five.

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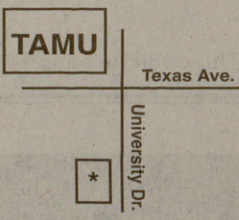
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► What's Up?

- Thursday**
- A&M Christian Fellowship:** The Kickoff Rally will be held from 7-8 p.m. in 201 MSC. For details call Stephen Alexander at 696-4002.
 - ATM Roadrunners:** A 3 to 4-mile run will begin at G. Rollie White Coliseum at 6 p.m. Different levels of runners are welcome. For more information call Dao at 260-2441.
 - Catholic Students Association:** Daily mass will be held at 12:15 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. at the A&M All Faith's Chapel.
 - Catholic Students Association:** Fourth day will be held at 6:15 p.m. at the St. Mary's Student Center for those who have made an Aggie Awakening Retreat.
 - Catholic Students Association:** ESCALA (Estudiantes Catolicos Latino Americanos) will be held at 8 p.m. at St. Mary's Student Center Library. For details call Octavio at 846-5787.
 - ATM Roadrunners:** A 3 to 4-mile run will begin at G. Rollie White Coliseum at 6 p.m. Different levels of runners are welcome. For more information call Dao at 260-2441.
 - Men's Lacrosse Club:** Practice will be held from 4-6 p.m. at the Zachry Fields. Everyone is welcome and no experience is necessary. For details call Todd Hendreks at 764-8561.
- Friday**
- Study Abroad Programs Office:** There will be an informational meeting to promote the Italy Spring '97 program from 3:15-4 p.m. in 358 Bizzell Hall West.
 - Catholic Students Association:** Graduate Student's Group will meet at St. Mary's Student Center at 6 p.m. for dinner and socializing at local restaurant. For more information contact Bob at 779-6713 or Tim at 822-5242.
 - Catholic Students Association:** Daily Mass at St. Mary's Church will begin at 5:30 p.m.
 - Men's Lacrosse Club:** Practice will be held from 4-6 p.m. at Zachry Fields. Everyone is welcome and no experience is necessary. Call Todd Hendreks 764-8561 for information.
- What's Up is a Battalion series that lists non-profit student, faculty events and activities. Items should be submitted later than three days in advance of the desired run date. Application deadlines and notices are not events and not be run in What's Up. If you have any questions, please call the newsroom at 845-3313.**

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