

Pinching Pennies With Cheap, Quick Eats? Fast Food Could Actually Cost You More In The Long Run

(NAPSA)—When money is tight, it's easy to get drawn in by the words "99-cent menu," especially if you have a car full of hungry children.

But saving bucks at the fast-food drive-through can backfire on you and all those eager beavers.

How?

Fast foods that are high in fat, calories and sugar can have long-term consequences on health.

A study published in the April 2009 volume of *Obesity* reveals that one-third of fast-food purchases contain more than 1,000 calories. That's nearly half of what an average adult should consume in an entire day, depending on age and level of physical activity.

Researchers believe the high calorie count of these purchases is due to a combination of the type of food preparation (i.e., fried), high-calorie/high-fat menu choices and larger portion sizes.

More calories can translate into added weight if you and your family are not staying in energy balance by getting up and moving more. That's why you should check out the calories on the menu board, the restaurant's Web site, or any hard-copy handouts that restaurants offer, to determine how many are contained in the portion you're considering.

"Supersized portions at restaurants have distorted our view of what a normal portion size looks like," said Karen Donato, S.M., coordinator of Overweight and Obesity Research Applications, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. "Through our science-based We Can!® program, we're



not just trying to create awareness of the fact that portions have doubled in size over the last 20 years—we're working to help families eat right, be more physically active and spend less time in front of the screen so that their children can stay at a healthy weight."

We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition) offers parents and caregivers of 8- to 13-year-olds tips, trainings and other tools—such as nutritious recipes, healthy cooking substitutions and a portion distortion quiz—to help them create a healthy lifestyle for the whole family. For these, a free parents' handbook and more, visit wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov or call (866) 35-WE CAN.

With nearly half of every U.S. food dollar being spent on food prepared outside the home, it's time to start thinking about what you're buying with those hard-earned dollars, so that you don't find yourself stuck with a big health bill later.