



**New Survey: One Year After 9-11, American Eating Habits Take Healthier Turn
Many are Struggling to Lose Weight Gained After Attacks
by Exercising More, Eating Lighter**

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According to a new survey commissioned by the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), an overwhelming majority of Americans say that the events of September 11, 2001, have not had a significant long-term impact on their day-to-day eating habits, for good or ill. However, one in 10 Americans say they gained weight in the months immediately following the attacks, and most are still struggling to lose those extra pounds.

“Immediately after the attacks, there was a lot of conjecture that Americans were turning to unhealthy eating behaviors, and our initial survey in November 2001 showed that to be the case for about **20 percent** of Americans – which represented about 56 million people,” said AICR’s Director of Nutrition Education, Melanie Polk, R.D. “We commissioned a follow-up survey to see how Americans are faring today.”

In the survey, **15 percent** confessed they were turning to **comfort foods** more than they did before September 11, 2001. Another **14 percent** reported **eating more sweets** than they were before the terrorist attacks.

These numbers represent a slight but encouraging drop-off from the previous AICR survey, conducted exactly two months after the terror attacks on New York and Washington. At that time, **20 percent** of Americans said they had found themselves eating more comfort foods, while **19 percent** reported eating more sweet, sugary foods.

John P. Foreyt, Ph.D., of the Behavioral Medicine Center at Houston's Baylor College of Medicine, studies how emotional responses impact patterns of food consumption. He believes the sheer magnitude of the events on September 11, 2001 is the reason the unhealthy changes revealed in the AICR survey have held on for so long.

At the time of the first survey, AICR experts expressed concern that those individuals who had turned to unhealthy eating behaviors in the wake of the attacks might find it difficult to get back on track before the holiday season began. To gauge the effect of the attacks on American waistlines, the new AICR survey asked a series of additional questions about weight change, and its perceived causes.

"We'll never know the *precise* extent to which the terrorist attacks influenced people to turn toward unhealthy behaviors," said AICR's Polk, "because the attacks occurred at a time of the year when the weather gets colder and Americans traditionally transition to richer, heartier fare.

"But we can and did ask Americans to tell us what *they* thought, and what they said is surprising." **Nine percent** of those surveyed said they had **gained weight** "in the months immediately following the terrorist attacks." When asked why they believed they had gained weight, most – **47 percent** – attributed the extra pounds to miscellaneous "**personal reasons.**" Another **23 percent** blamed a **less strict diet during the holiday season**, and **14 percent** said their weight gain was due to the **heartier foods they ate over the winter**. In the end, less than one-tenth of those who said they gained weight attributed their weight gain to **anxiety over the terrorist attacks.**

"That's not a large percentage by any means, but it represents some 2.3 million people," Polk said.

Almost half (43 percent) **of those who said they gained weight following the attacks said they had** lost none of that extra weight. **Another** 37 percent **reported losing only** some of the weight. **Only** 18 percent **said they had managed to lose most or all of the extra weight.**

If your weight has been increasing, take the initiative. *Shape Your Future...Your Weigh!*[™] can provide additional practical strategies to prevent weight gain. Your base Health and Wellness Center (HAWC) and Dietitian provide guidance on modifying your portion size to stay fit and healthy. Call them today!