

## Obesity Through the Looking Glass Part 1 of 4

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*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the King's horses, and all  
the King's men,  
couldn't put Humpty  
together again.*

### Who is Humpty Dumpty?

A misunderstood and sensitive chap immortalized in Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass:

*'It's very provoking,' Humpty Dumpty said after a long silence, looking away from Alice as he spoke, 'to be called an egg -- very!' 'I said you looked like an egg, Sir,' Alice gently explained. 'And some eggs are very pretty, you know,' she added, hoping to turn her remark into a sort of compliment.*

The equal girth of neck and waist raised an issue:

*What a beautiful belt you've got on!' 'At least,' she corrected herself on second thought, 'a beautiful cravat, I should have said -- no, a belt, I mean -- I beg your pardon!' [...] 'If only I knew,' she thought to herself, 'which was neck and which was waist!' [...] 'It is a -- most -- provoking -- thing,' he said at last, 'when a person doesn't know a cravat from a belt!'*

#### Two Other Legendary Humpty Dumpties Suffered Mishaps

Humpty Dumpty was the nickname for a huge 17C wooden battering ram built to enable King Charles I's army to cross the Severn River. The ram was wrecked in midstream, "had a great fall", and toppled into the water, drowning hundreds of soldiers--and there was nothing all the king's men could do about it.

Humpty Dumpty was a powerful cannon used in the English Civil War. It fell off the St. Mary's at the Wall Church in Colchester during the siege of 1648, and could not be mended.

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### A Disease In and Unto Itself

Usually regarded only as a factor in the onset of chronic ailments, in truth, obesity entered the International Classification of Diseases in the 1950's.

### A Closer View

For more than a decade, Canadians self-reported their own height and weight, which underestimated the prevalence of overweight and obesity. In 2004, the Canadian Community Health Survey: Nutrition (CCHS) directly measured respondents' height and weight, drawing a more accurate picture.

### A Clearer Picture

Between 1978 and 2004, the rate of Canadian overweight/obese adolescents aged 12 to 17 more than doubled from 14% to 29%, while their obesity rate alone tripled from 3% to 9%. Obesity rates rose for every age group among adults except those 65 to 74. The most striking upturns were among people younger than 35 and those 75 or older.

### A Similar Lens

Unbiased assessment of the Canadian population allows direct comparison to American statistics, which historically have been objectively measured. 30% of Americans aged 18 or older were obese in 1999/2002, significantly above the Canadian rate of 23%. Most of this difference was attributable to women. While 23% of Canadian women were obese, the figure for American women was 33%.

### Through a Looking Glass

Research indicates that overweight and obese people often do not recognize themselves as such, particularly when they associate, live and/or work with people of greater weight than themselves. **ff**

### Some Web sites

<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050706/d050706a>.

<http://www.obesite.chaire.ulaval.ca/iotf.htm>

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