



*Intermittent Fasting with Potato Chips, photograph by Ted Kyle / ConscienHealth*

# The Public Health and Policy Implications of Food Noise

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June 28, 2024

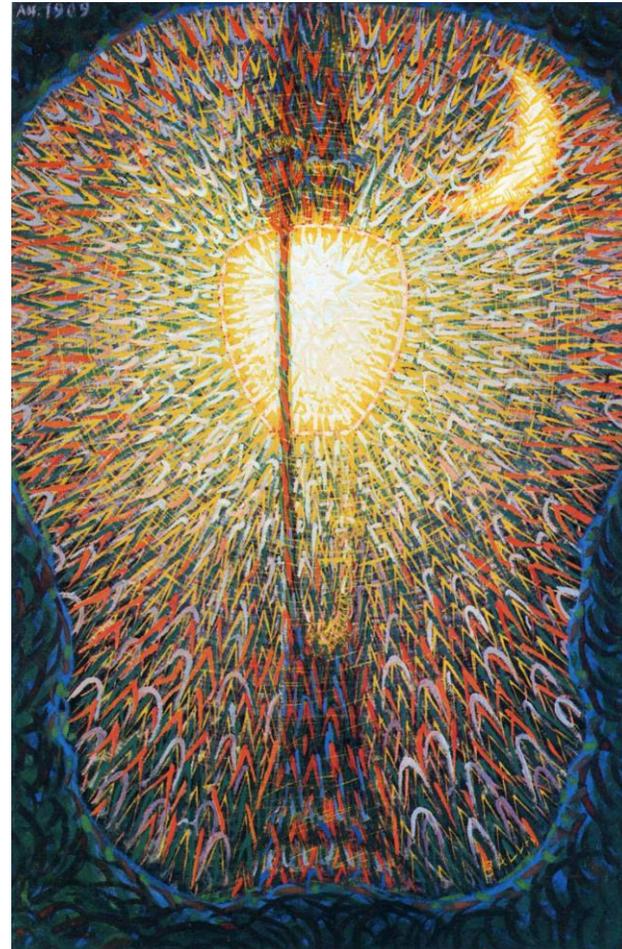
# Disclosures

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- **Professional fees**
  - Boehringer Ingelheim
  - Emerald Lake Safety
  - Novo Nordisk
  - Nutrisystem
  - Roman Health Ventures
- **Personal biases that favor:**
  - Evidence-based interventions, both prevention and treatment
  - Respect for people living with obesity
  - Critical thinking about all evidence

# Presentation Objectives

- Describe past, present, and future policies aimed at reducing obesity and its harm
- Discuss the relevance of food noise to those policies
- Identify issues relevant to developing measures of food noise



*Street Light, painting by Giacomo Balla / WikiArt*

# Fifty Years Ago, Policymakers Thought Preventing Obesity Was Simple

1974

“Most Obesity Could, with Care, Be Prevented”

doi: [10.1016/S0140-6736\(74\)93004-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(74)93004-9)

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THE LANCET

Volume 303, Issue 7845, 5 January 1974, Pages 17-18

## Infant and Adult Obesity

OBESITY is the most important nutritional disease in the affluent countries of the world. In the absence of an internationally agreed criterion for diagnosis an exact figure for prevalence cannot be given, but surveys in Britain and the United States show that about a third of the population is overweight to an extent associated with diminished life expectancy.<sup>1</sup>

The exact significance of hyperplastic and hypertrophic obesity is still not clear, but on balance the evidence suggests that we need to be more vigilant in preventing obesity throughout childhood. Probably the obese adult can never be “cured”, but most obesity could, with care, be prevented.

doi: [10.1016/S0140-6736\(74\)93004-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(74)93004-9)

# Treatment Was Seen by Most as Futile

April 28, 1993



## Futility and Avoidance

### Medical Professionals in the Treatment of Obesity

Arthur Frank, MD

*JAMA*. 1993;269(16):2132-2133. doi:10.1001/jama.1993.03500160102041

#### **Abstract**

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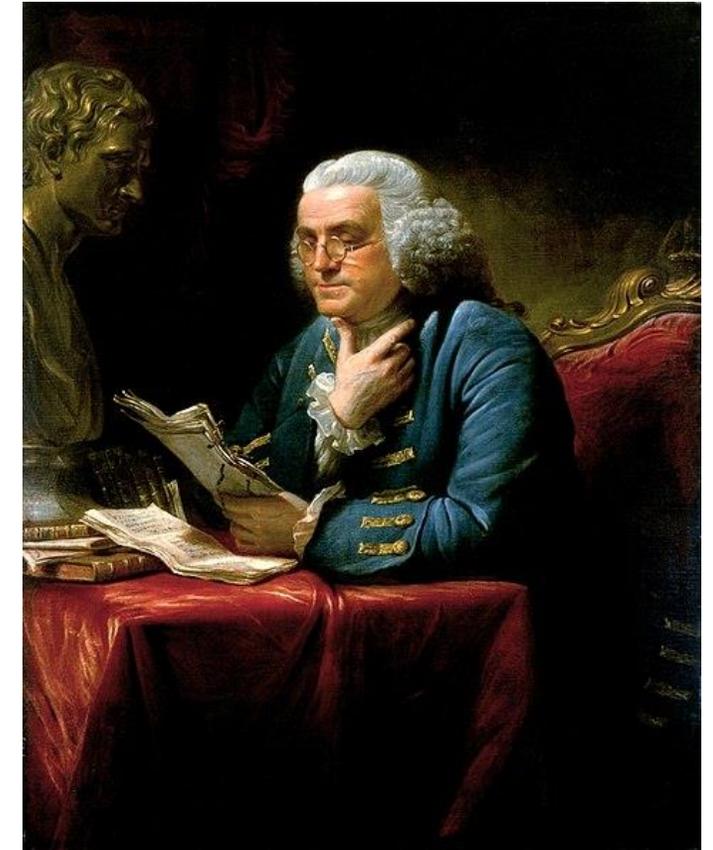
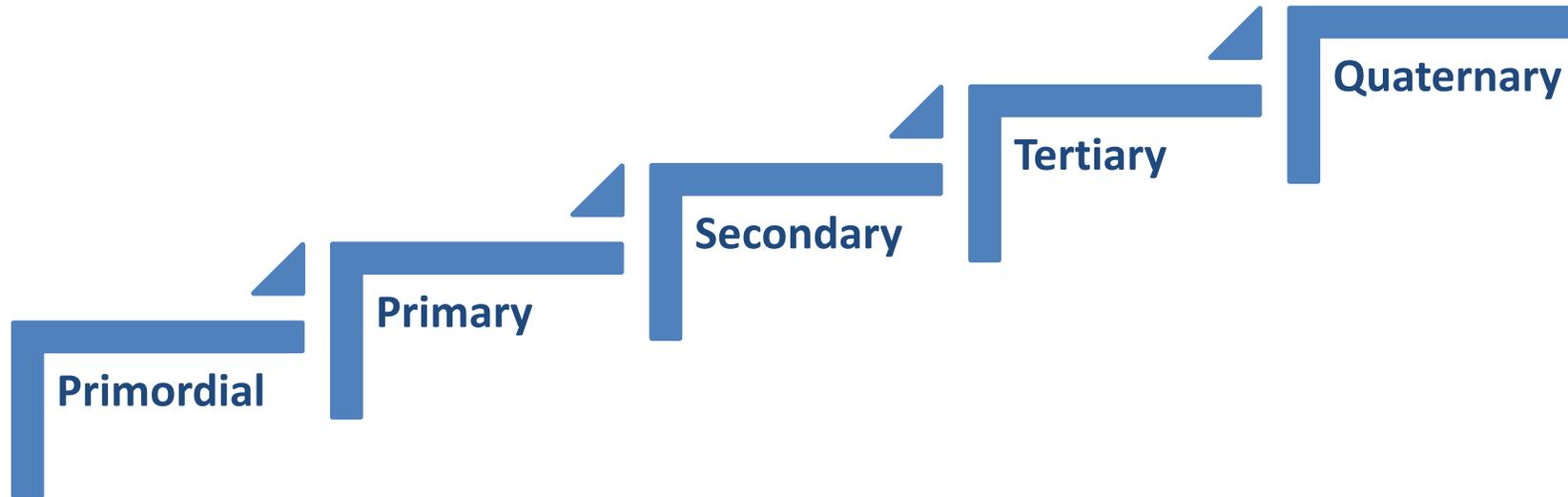
**T**WENTY years ago, I changed course in my internal medicine practice and decided, rather deliberately, to work on the problem of obesity. My friends, my colleagues, and my family thought I was crazy. The warnings were clear. "Don't risk your credibility and your career." "Don't venture into a part of medicine that no one takes seriously." "Don't move into the world of quacks and charlatans."

# Obesity Prevention: What Are We Talking About?



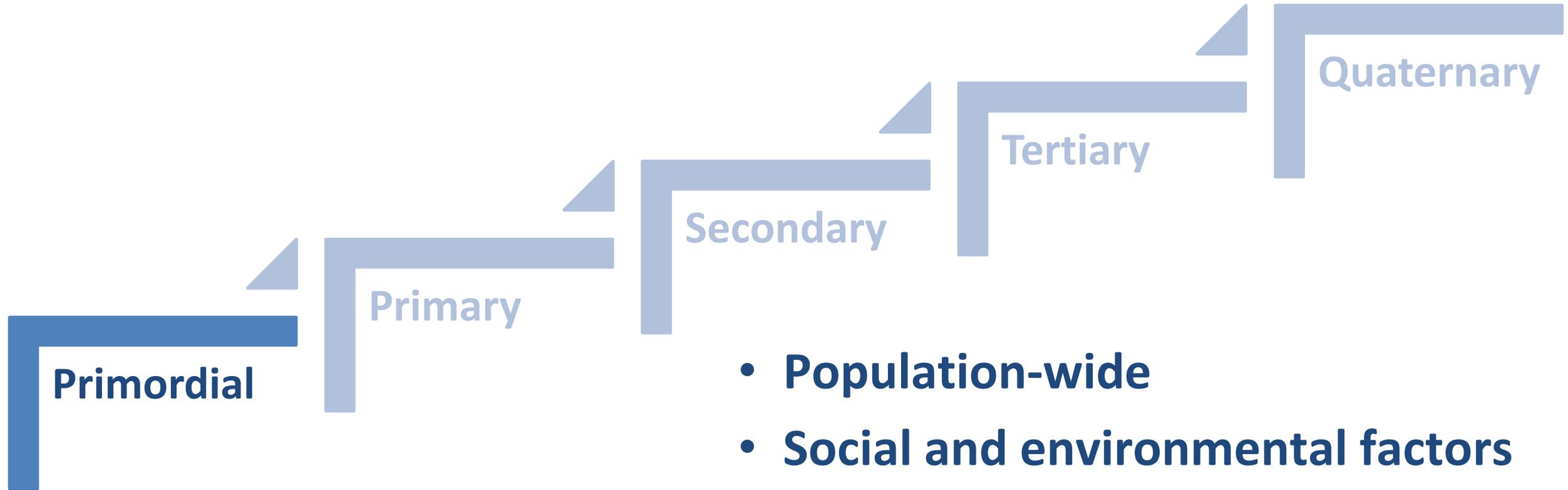
*Talking, photograph by Pedro Ribeiro Simões / flickr, CC BY 2.0*

# An Ounce of Prevention Comes in Many Forms



*Benjamin Franklin, portrait by David Martin*

# Primordial Prevention



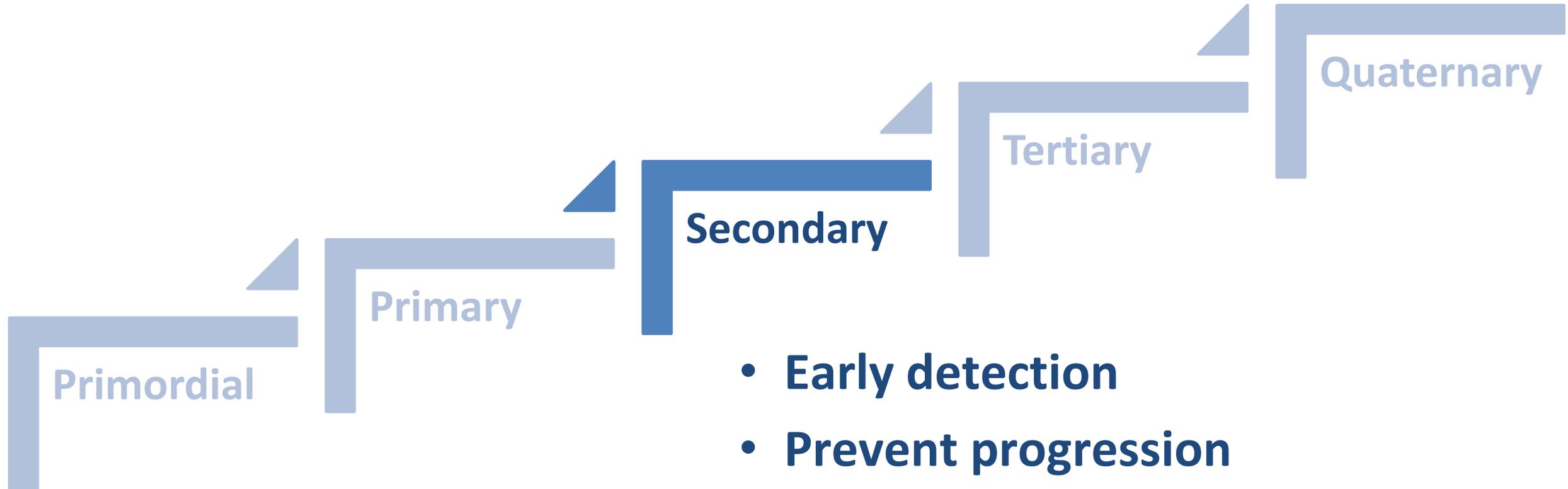
- **Population-wide**
- **Social and environmental factors**
- **Examples: soda taxes, sidewalks**

# Primary Prevention



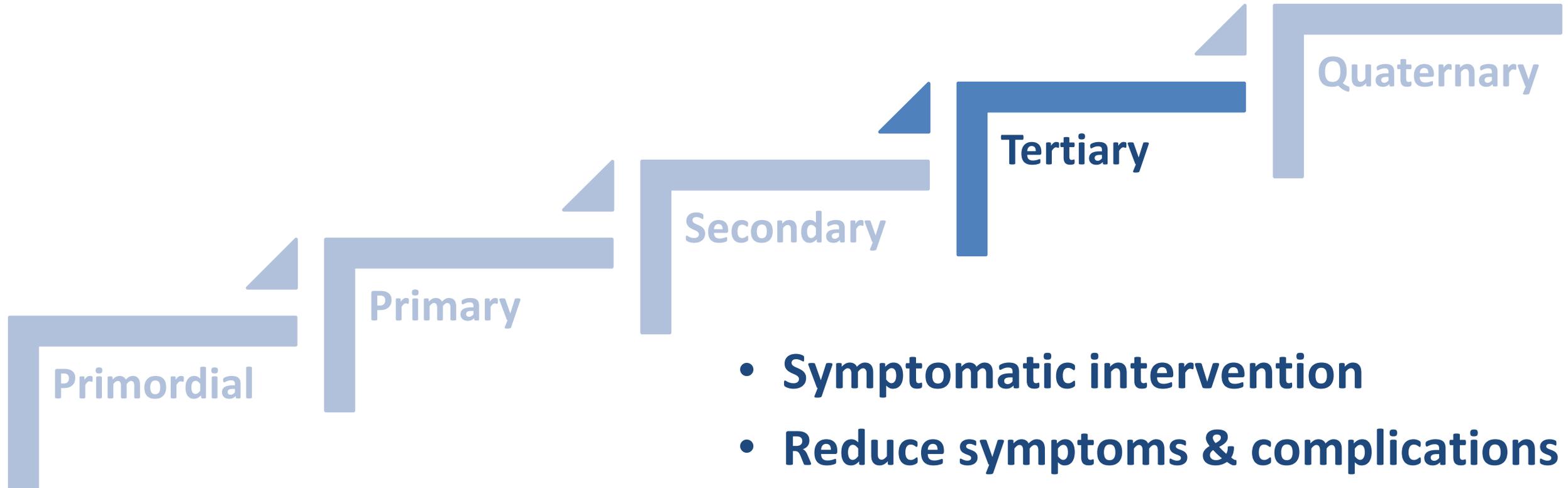
- **Populations at risk**
- **Limit risks in vulnerable groups**
- **Examples: WIC, diet and exercise**

# Secondary Prevention



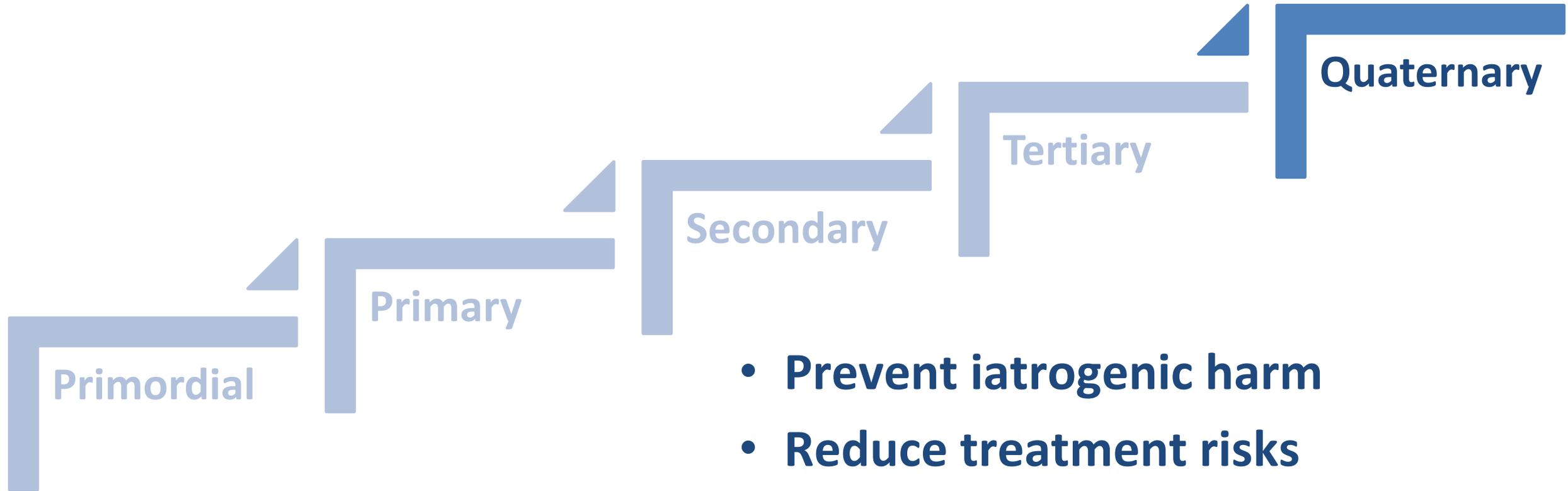
- **Early detection**
- **Prevent progression**
- **Examples: BMI screening, DPP**

# Tertiary Prevention



- **Symptomatic intervention**
- **Reduce symptoms & complications**
- **Examples: obesity meds, surgery**

# Quaternary Prevention



- Prevent iatrogenic harm
- Reduce treatment risks
- Examples: MBSAQIP, HAES

# Confidence in Primordial and Primary Prevention Is Easy to Find

Home / Health  
Home / Medical economics



-  Share
-  Twit
-  Share
-  Email

 NOVEMBER 21, 2023

 Editors' notes

## A sugar tax in Germany could save as much as 16 billion euros and improve population health

by Technical University Munich

# Confidence in Primordial and Primary Prevention Is Easy to Find



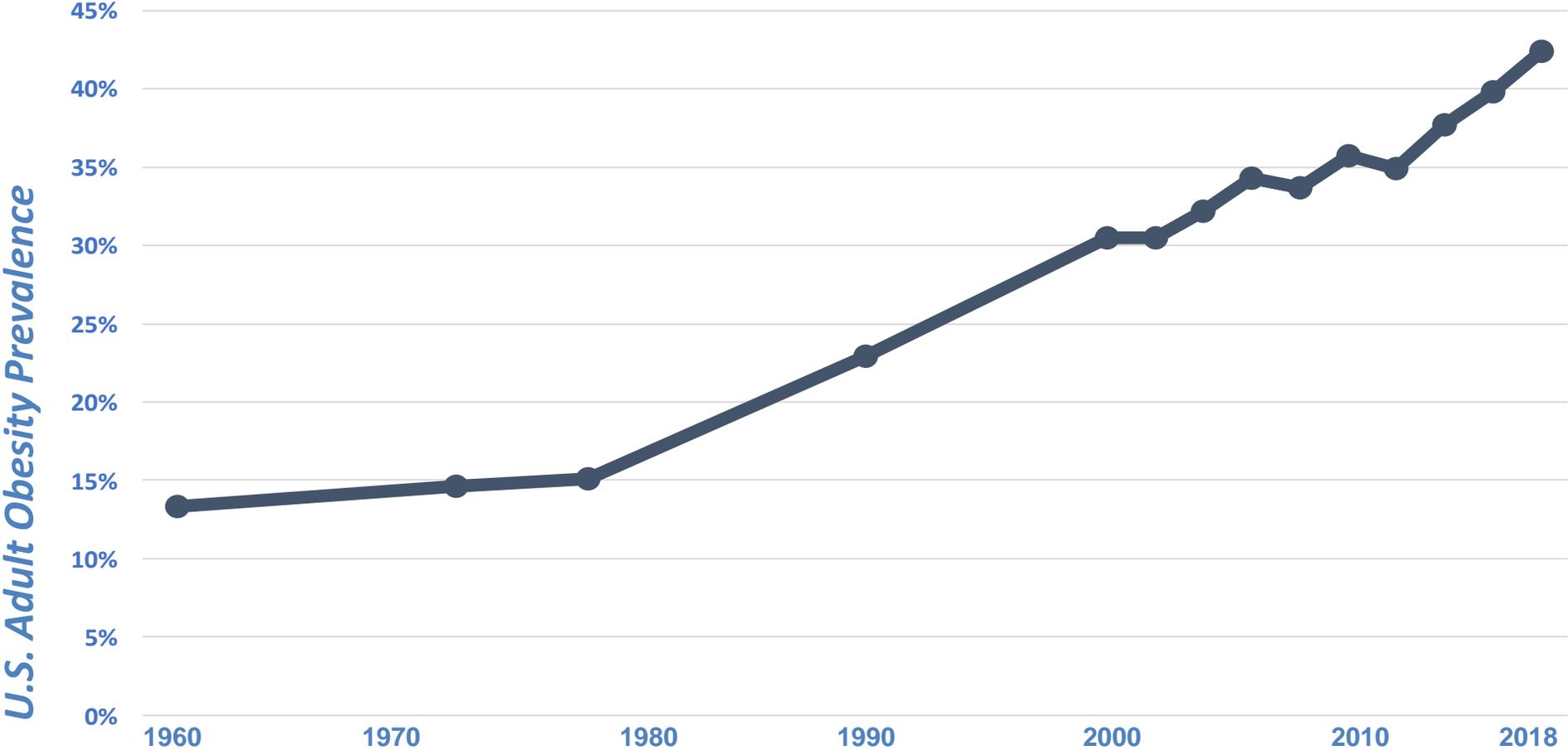
Slide presented by CDC at The State of Obesity congressional briefing 2019.02

# Obesity Policy: What Progress Have We Made and Why?



*FDA Chemist Inspects Results, photograph by FDA / Wikimedia Commons*

# Obesity Continues to Rise Relentlessly



# Two Kinds of Bias Get in the Way of Reducing the Harm of Obesity

- **Intellectual bias**  
favoring personal convictions
- **Weight bias**  
directed at people with obesity



God Judging Adam, Etching by William Blake / WikiArt

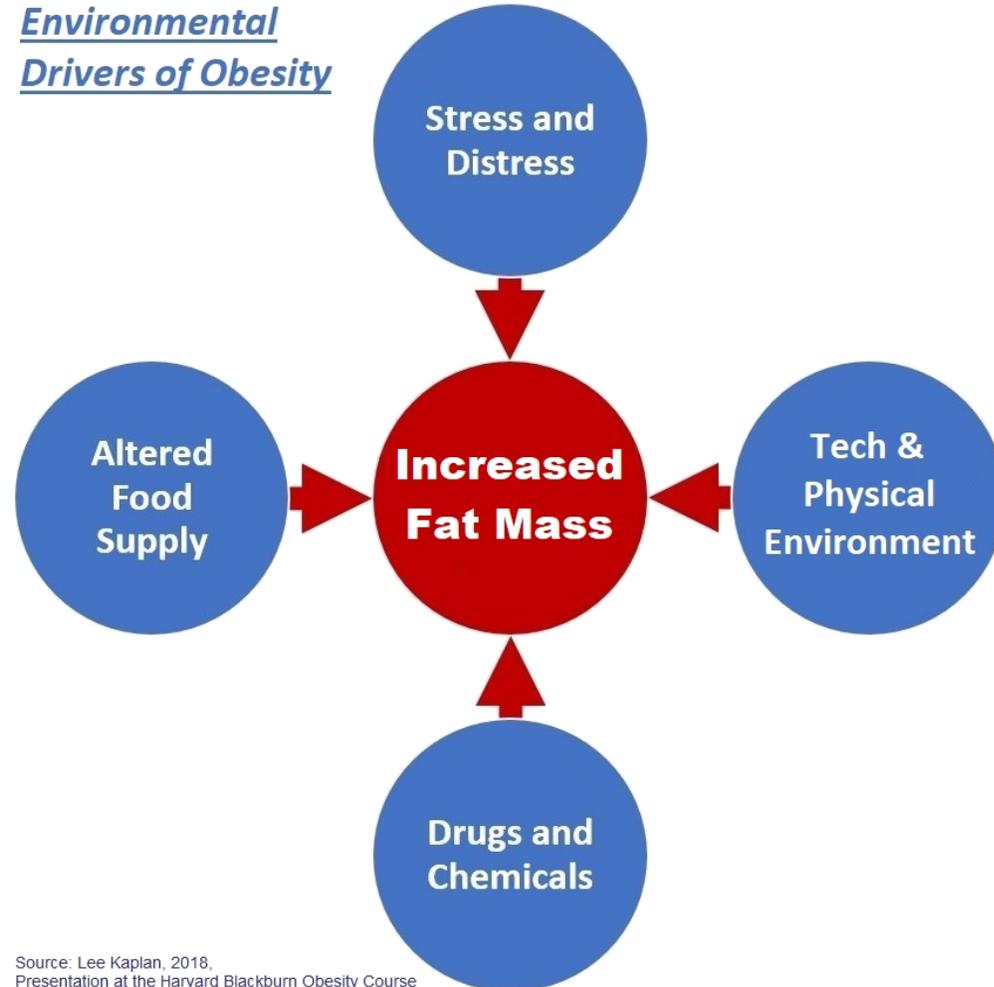
# Bias Favors Simplistic Policy Solutions



# The Truth of Obesity Is More Complex

*Multiple factors are driving obesity rates*

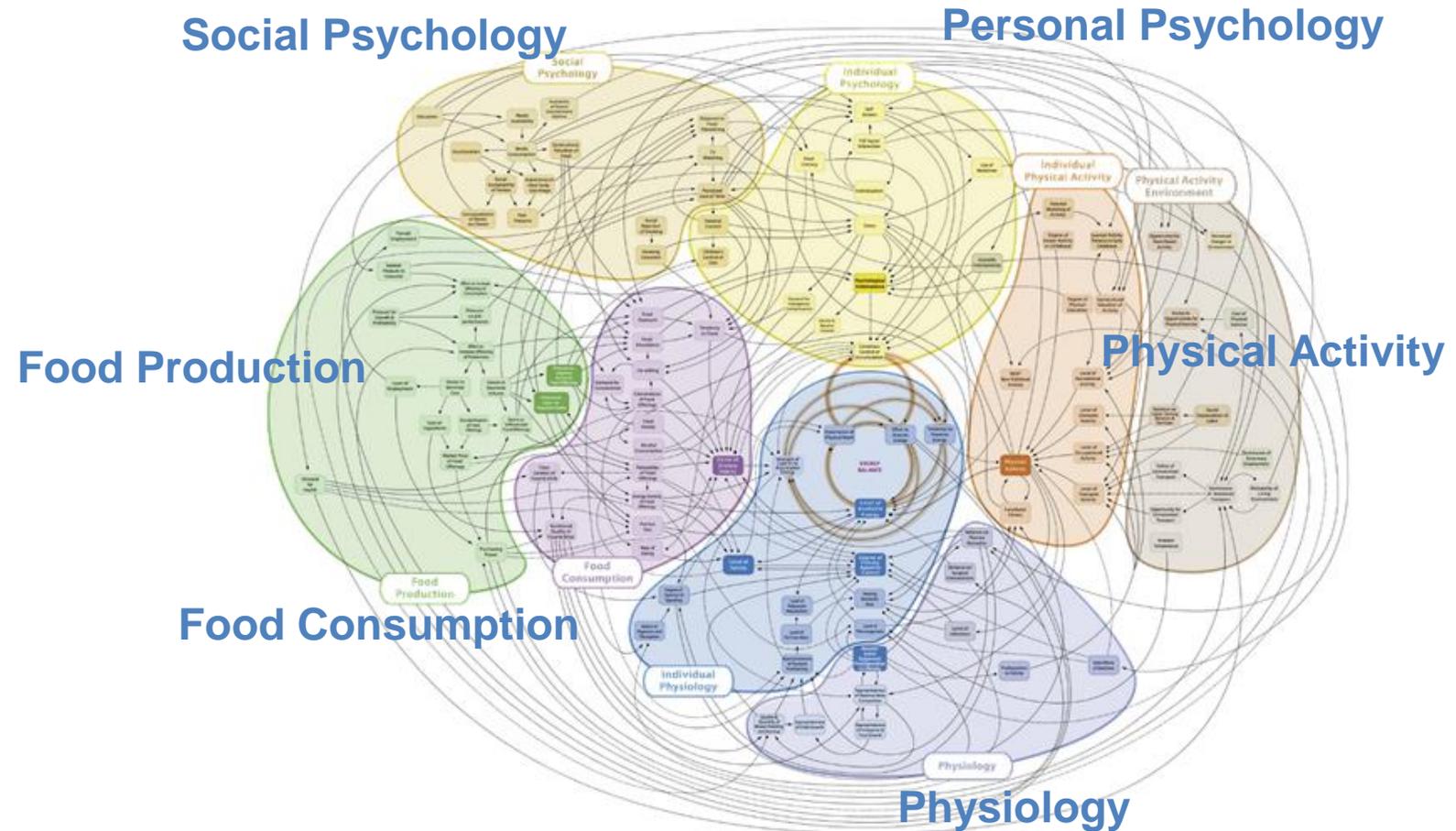
Environmental Drivers of Obesity



Source: Lee Kaplan, 2018.  
Presentation at the Harvard Blackburn Obesity Course

# The Truth of Obesity Is More Complex

*Those factors interact with complex adaptive systems to drive obesity rates*



# The Current Policy Narrative Finds Ultra-Processed Foods Guilty for Obesity

 The Guardian

Flamin' hot addictions: why is America so hooked on ultra-processed foods?

Habit-forming and intrinsically nutritionally unbalanced junk foods elevate the levels of hormones responsible for hunger.

Jun 23, 2023



 NPR

Ultraprocessed foods dominate Americans' diets. Here's what they're doing to us : Shots - Health News

ARI SHAPIRO, HOST: Kids in the U.S. are now getting two-thirds of their calories from ultra-processed foods. It's a trend that's been going...

May 25, 2023



# Food Development, Production, and Marketing Contribute to the Rise of Obesity

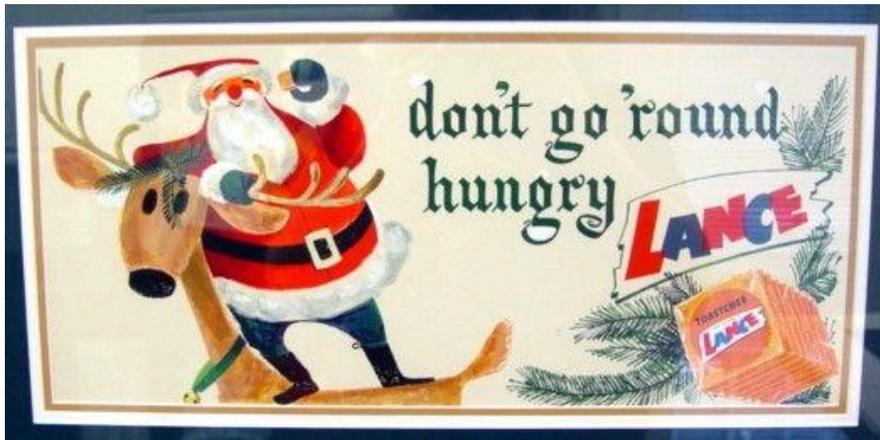
- Basic principles of food marketing
- Palatable food we like consuming
- Pricing that appeals
- Placement to spur purchase
- Creative promotion
- Repeat purchase patterns drive success and future offerings



The Evolution of an Obesogenic Food Supply

# Interaction of Food Marketing and Culture Fills Our Lives with Food Cues

- Ubiquitous ultra-processed foods
- Endlessly creative advertising media
- Product placement everywhere
- Subtle, pervasive promotions



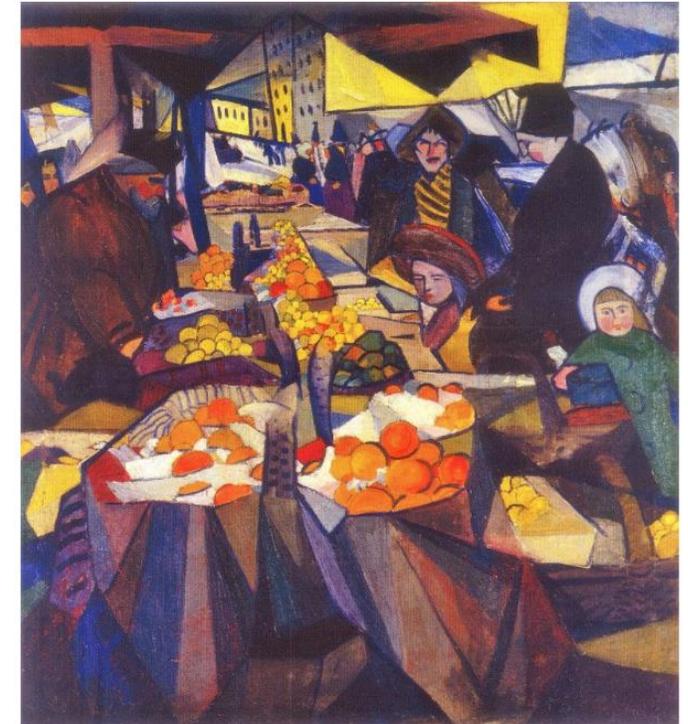
Advertising for Lance Toastchee



## Food Cues in the Eat-More Food Environment

Our food environment has changed to contribute to the rise in obesity over the last half century. People disagree about many things in the effort to find policies to reduce obesity. But this presumption is one that most of us can agree upon. The real question, though, is how to define these changes. Are ultra-processed foods the problem? Or food marketing? Or maybe both? Though this kind of thinking is very popular, we suspect the problem is far broader. In short, we live in an [eat-more food environment](#) that immerses us in a wide range of food cues all through the day and everywhere we go.

From this viewpoint, the growth in obesity stems not just from food marketers pushing the wrong kinds of food at us. No, it's food cues everywhere we turn that prompt us to eat the foods we like, all day long. Online, in meetings, as we travel, in every waking minute, food cues are all around us.



Sennoy Market in Kiev, painting by Oleksandr Bogomazov / WikiArt

# Ubiquitous Food Cues and Marketing Are More Resilient Than Regulatory Efforts



The New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com> › 2018/02/07 › health › obesi... ⋮

## In Sweeping War on Obesity, Chile Slays Tony the Tiger

Feb 7, 2018 — The **Chilean** government, facing skyrocketing rates of obesity, is waging war on unhealthy foods with a phalanx of marketing restrictions, ...



statnews.com

<https://www.statnews.com> › 2024/06/13 › tony-the-tige... ⋮

## What happened to obesity after Chile slew Tony the Tiger?

Jun 13, 2024 — **Chile's** effort to halt the rise of obesity with dramatic food package warnings sounded like a solution. But it didn't work.

# Ubiquitous Food Cues and Marketing Are More Resilient Than Regulatory Efforts



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## Junk food: Obesity strategy falling apart, Jamie Oliver says

14 May 2022

By Adam Durbin, BBC News

# But Some Are Speculating That Obesity Medicines May Bring Change to Food Marketing



The New York Times

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## In the Ozempic Age, Has 'Craveable' Lost Its Selling Power?

The food industry has long touted its products as impossible to resist. But with a spotlight on the perils of compulsive eating, that tactic is getting another look.



# But Some Are Speculating That Obesity Medicines May Bring Change to Food Marketing

NATIONAL POST

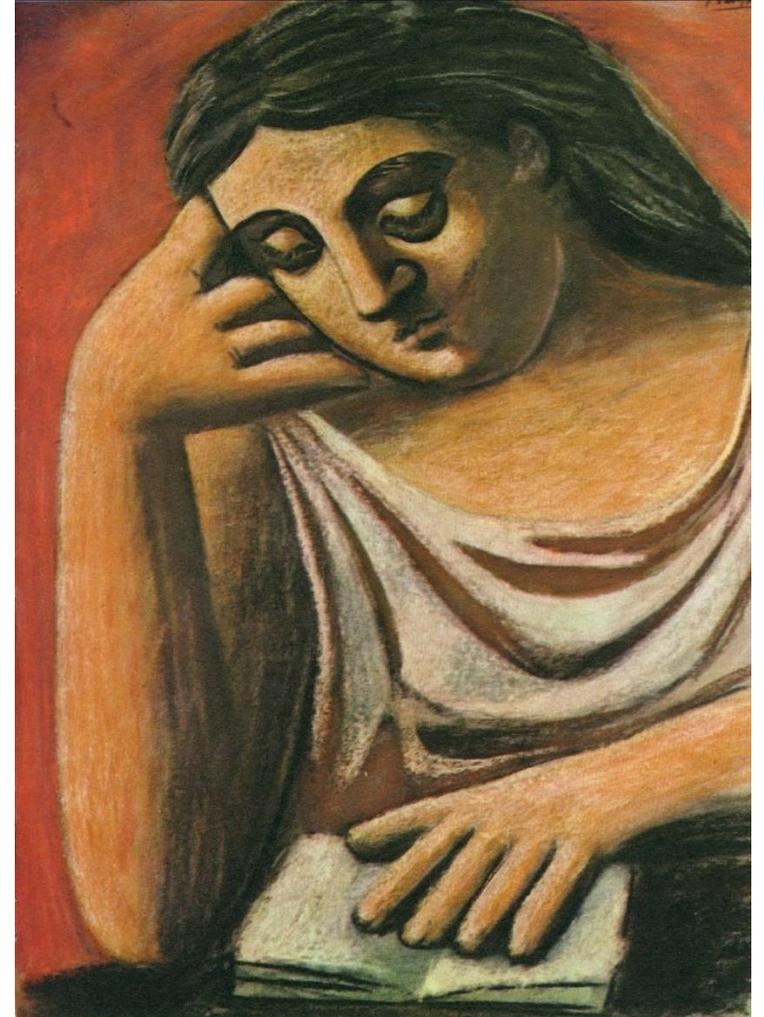
Life / Eating & Drinking

## 'It's not going away': How weight-loss drugs like Ozempic are changing the food industry

*Amid a GLP-1 boom, food companies are creating new products to appeal to the shifting appetites of people on weight-loss drugs*

# Summary

- Food cues fill our lives, everywhere we turn
- Primordial and primary obesity prevention efforts do not have much effect
- These cues may interact with internal perceptions of food noise
- Accounting for ambient food cues (i.e. noise) may be important
- This interaction has policy implications



Reading, painting by Pablo Picasso / WikiArt

# More Information

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For these slides:

<https://conscienhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/FoodNoise.pdf>

