

Teenage Weight-Loss

Read the following passage carefully. Find the meanings of the words listed below and then answer the following questions on the basis of what is stated or implied.

1 It is not news that there is an obesity epidemic. It *is* news that increasing numbers of young people are resorting to laxatives, and other draconian techniques such as self-induced vomiting, in order to lose and/or maintain weight. This approach to weight loss can be likened to using a nuclear bomb to force open a door.

5 Youth is traditionally a time of physical invincibility and perfection. It is the time when the body easily forgives nights spent drinking stomach-expanding beers and eating calorie-laden pizzas. In short, the young do not have to starve themselves to stay thin since nature is already working overtime to ensure that they keep their slight waistlines.

10 Why then the laxatives and the induced vomiting? We are forced irresistibly to one of two conclusions, or both together. One is that the volume of food imbibed by teens is such that it overwhelms and outstrips the young body's inclination to incinerate calories. The body simply cannot metabolise the imbibed calories fast enough to stave off weight gain. Misguided teenagers then 'puke' it all up to compensate.

15 The second is that the benchmark for 'thin' has moved. Thin has become skeletal. Nature works efficiently for young persons to maintain a healthy weight, not to provide maximum rib-cage exposure. The 'new thin' necessitates very limited food intake – there is no other way to get the starved-refugee look.

Rapid and unsightly weight loss and unintended consequences such as bad breath, bad skin and rotting teeth don't deter these teenagers.

20 Happily, however, the popularity of these techniques wanes as teenagers mature. By age 20 most are eating normally or relying on traditional, safe and health-preserving methods of weight control. Time, therefore, appears to be one remedy.

25 But for those in the danger age group of 13-18 there appears to be no good solution. Education about good nutrition and the importance of exercise, and the promotion in the media of more realistic and healthy body types are the measures we use to combat our obesity problem. Given our success there I think we are probably better off hoping that these diet methods are a passing fad.

Give the meanings of the words listed below.

1. epidemic (line 1) – **an outbreak of a disease that spreads quickly among the people of an area**
2. laxative (line 2) – **a medicine that stimulates the bowels to empty**
3. draconian (line 2) – **very harsh**
4. invincibility (line 5) – **not able to be defeated**
5. imbibed (line 10) – **drink**
6. incinerate (line 11) – **destroy something by burning**
7. stave off (line 12) – **keep something away**
8. benchmark (line 14) – **standard by which something can be judged or measured**
9. deter (line 19) – **discourage or prevent a person from doing something**
10. wanes (line 20) – **become less, smaller or weaker**
11. combat (line 25) – **fight**
12. fad (line 26) – **a temporary fashion or craze**

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Please answer the following questions.

1. The writer uses the phrase 'It is not news' (line 1) in respect of the obesity epidemic to
 - A. show the epidemic is not worth reporting.
 - B. emphasise the epidemic's insignificance.
 - C. convey that most persons already know about the epidemic.
 - D. highlight the seriousness of the epidemic.

2. The writer thinks young people should not have to resort to draconian methods to lose weight because
 - A. they know about healthy methods of weight loss.
 - B. healthy foods are inexpensive.
 - C. their youth makes it easy for them to lose weight.
 - D. they look better with some fat.

3. According to the passage teenagers induce vomiting because
 - A. the food upsets their stomachs.
 - B. they don't like feeling full.
 - C. they have eaten too little.
 - D. they want to be slim.

4. What does the writer mean by 'The benchmark for thin has moved' (line 14)?
 - A. Teenagers are getting thinner.
 - B. The standard for what is considered thin has changed.
 - C. Fat is becoming less popular.
 - D. Thin teenagers are moving home.

5. The line 'starved-refugee look' (line 16) suggests these teenagers appear

- A. unhealthy.
- B. unsettled.
- C. alien.
- D. popular.

6. Which of the following is NOT a symptom of draconian weight-loss techniques?

- A. rapid weight loss
- B. rotting teeth
- C. foul breath
- D. slow and steady weight loss

7. The writer refers to 13-18 age groups as 'the danger age group' (line 23) because

- A. teenagers are most violent at that age.
- B. this age group is most likely to adopt bad methods of losing weight.
- C. this age group is the most likely to die from rapid weight loss.
- D. this age group is the least healthy.

8. The primary purpose of the writer is to

- A. highlight effective weight-loss techniques.
- B. embarrass teenagers who use laxatives to lose weight.
- C. explore the causes of and solutions to drastic weight-loss techniques being employed by teenagers.
- D. present a point of view about the use of laxatives and self-induced vomiting.