

Ultra-processed food

Why are ultra-processed foods and drinks bad for us?




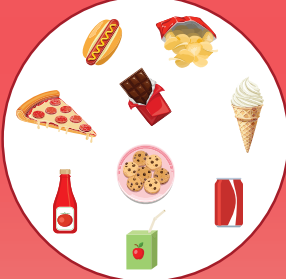
- Ultra-processed foods (UPF) and drinks are common in Western diets
- They have low nutritional value, contain additives, and go through many processes to become the final product
- They often have high amounts of unhealthy ingredients like saturated fats, high-fructose corn syrup, additives, and preservatives
- In their package, there are some harmful plastics like endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs)

Grinshpan LS. et al., *JHEP Reports*, 2024

What is the practical way to identify if a product is ultra-processed?

UPF contains characteristic ingredients of no or rare culinary use in your kitchen, for example:

- Hydrolyzed proteins
- Fructose, high-fructose corn syrup
- Hydrogenated oil
- “Cosmetic additives”- flavors, colors, emulsifiers
- Palm oil
- UPF tends to be high in energy, salt, sugars (mainly fructose or high fructose corn syrup), and fat (in particular saturated fatty acids), with low nutritional value
- UPF is usually very easy to use, ready to eat/heat, durable, and hyper-palatable
- UPF is packed in plastics and cans
- Usually, UPF contains more than 5 ingredients

NOVA Food Classification			
UNPROCESSED OR MINIMALLY PROCESSED FOODS	PROCESSED CULINARY INGREDIENTS	PROCESSED FOODS	ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS
<p>Foods which did not undergo processing or underwent minimal processing techniques, such as fractioning, grinding, pasteurization & others</p> 	<p>These are obtained from minimally processed food & used to season, cook, & create culinary dishes</p> 	<p>These are unprocessed or minimally processed foods or culinary dishes which have been added processed culinary ingredients. They are necessarily industrialized</p> 	<p>These are food products derived from foods or parts of foods, being added cosmetic food additives not used in culinary</p> 
Legumes, vegetables, fruits, starchy roots & tubers, grains, nuts, eggs, chicken, & milk	Salt, sugar, vegetable oils, butter & other fats	Bottled vegetables or meat in salt solution, fruits in syrup or candied, bread, cheeses, purées or pastes	Cookies, ice cream, shakes, ready-to-eat meals, soft drinks & other sugary drinks, hamburgers, & nuggets

Adopted from Oliveira P., *Frontiers in Nutrition*, 2022

Practical recommendation to reduce UPF consumption

- Drink water instead of sugary drinks
- Check food labels; choose items with shorter ingredient lists
- Include more unprocessed foods in meals and snacks (like veggies, fruits, yogurt, nuts, and eggs)
- Consider baking or buying homemade bread and pastries
- Cut down on processed snacks and sweets
- Cut down on processed meat (sausages, pastrami, salami, hamburger)

Please note that these are general recommendations and should not be considered a substitute for personalized advice from a professional