

Ultra-processed food

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

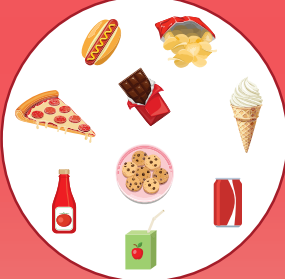
- Ultra-processed foods (UPF) and drinks are common in Western diets
- They have low nutritional value, contain additives, and go through many processes to become the final product
- They often have high amounts of unhealthy ingredients like saturated fats, high-fructose corn syrup, additives, and preservatives
- 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
Foods which did not undergo processing or underwent minimal processing techniques, such as fractioning, grinding, pasteurization & others 	These are obtained from minimally processed food & used to season, cook, & create culinary dishes 	These are unprocessed or minimally processed foods or culinary dishes which have been added processed culinary ingredients. They are necessarily industrialized 	These are food products derived from foods or parts of foods, being added cosmetic food additives not used in culinary 
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