

[IMAGE]

## Beware of Ultraprocessed Foods

By Editorial Staff

Let's start by answering the big question: What exactly are "ultraprocessed" foods? The authors of a 2018 study provide a great definition: "[F]ormulations mostly of cheap industrial sources of dietary energy and nutrients plus additives, using a series of processes." They're not talking about whole grains, fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds here; they're referring to foods that regrettably, have become commonplace in the average American household: soft drinks, chips, chocolate, candy, ice-cream, sweetened breakfast cereals, packaged soups, chicken nuggets, hotdogs, fries, etc.

If you haven't already figured out the answer to the next big question, here goes: Why are ultraprocessed foods bad for you? For one, they lead to excess calorie intake and weight gain. Researchers gave adults ultraprocessed and unprocessed diets for two weeks apiece, with each diet matched for calories, sugar, fat, fiber and macronutrients (protein, carbohydrate and fat). Subjects were instructed to eat as much of each meal as they desired.

Adults on the ultraprocessed diet consumed approximately 500 calories more per day compared to when they were on the unprocessed diet, and body-weight changes were also associated with excess energy (calorie) intake. Even more interesting, when the researchers performed fasting blood measurements on each subject, they found " the appetite-suppressing hormone PYY increased during the unprocessed diet as compared with both the ultra-processed diet and baseline. Also, the hunger hormone ghrelin was decreased during the unprocessed diet compared to baseline."

In other words, when eating unprocessed foods, two of the hormones that regulate appetite were more active, which helped "tell" subjects when they had eaten enough and made them less likely to overeat. Your doctor can tell you more about the dangers of ultraprocessed foods beyond calorie intake and weight gain. It's not a pretty picture.

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