

Learn More about Processed Foods

Carlos Monteiro, a professor at the University of São Paulo, believes that "the big issue is ultra-processing." That is to say, the most important factor when considering food and nutrition is neither nutrients nor foods -- it's what is done to foodstuffs and the nutrients contained in them before they are purchased and consumed. Monteiro makes it clear that most foods and drinks are currently processed to some extent -- even fresh apples are washed and sometimes waxed, and drinking water is filtered. But ultra-processed foods are all too common, and they are depleted of nutrients and provide little beyond calories.

According to the Atlantic:

"The purpose of ... ultra-processing is to create: durable, accessible, convenient, attractive, ready-to-eat or ready-to-heat products ... Monteiro argues: 'the rapid rise in consumption of ultra-processed food and drink products, especially since the 1980s, is the main dietary cause of the concurrent rapid rise in obesity and related diseases throughout the world.'"

Sources:

[The Atlantic November 4, 2010](#)

[Journal of the World Public Health Nutrition Association November 2010 Volume 1, Number 6](#)

Comments:

I wholeheartedly agree with Carlos Monteiro's assessment that "the most important factor now, when considering food, nutrition and public health, is not nutrients, and is not foods, so much as what is done to foodstuffs and the nutrients originally contained in them, before they are purchased and consumed."

Americans currently spend upwards of 90 percent of their food budgets purchasing *processed foods*, which offer very little in terms of nutritional value and instead typically contain ingredients that will actually cause you harm.

Monteiro maintains that "consumption of ultra-processed food and drink products, especially since the 1980s, is the main dietary cause of the concurrent rapid rise in obesity and related diseases throughout the world," a sentiment that closely echoes my own.

What makes processed foods, or as Monteiro calls them "ultra-processed foods," so devastating to your health?

Lots of Calories for Little Nutrition

If you eat a fast-food burger, you can easily take in close to half of your daily caloric requirements. Add in fries and a soda and you may be nearing an entire day's worth of required calories.

But in that one meal, which is designed to be eaten quickly, on-the-go, you have not received the vitamins and minerals, the live enzymes and micro-nutrients, the healthy fats or high-quality protein that your body needs to function, let alone thrive.

When these types of foods are consumed day in and day out, for months and years on end, what you end up with is a calorie-dense diet that is not giving you the nutrients you need to stay healthy. On a

diet like this, you will likely gain excess weight while your body is still literally starving for healthy nutrients.

With nearly [7 out of 10 Americans being overweight](#), and [1 in 4 being affected with diabetes or pre-diabetes](#), the heavily processed standard American diet, SAD, is clearly in dire need of a radical overhaul.

Processed Foods are Addictive

Fast food is available just about everywhere, including in hospitals and schools, and processed foods make up the majority of foods at your supermarket. They are marketed aggressively to kids and adults alike, and are manufactured using specific synthetic ingredients and other tricks to get you to eat more, crave more, and keep coming back for more.

As Monteiro wrote:

"Ultra-processed products are characteristically formulated from 'refined' and 'purified' ingredients freed from the fibrous watery matrix of their original raw materials.

They are formulated to be sensually appealing, hyper-palatable, and habit-forming, by the use of sophisticated mixtures of cosmetic and other additives, and state-of-the-craft packaging and marketing. Further, ultra-processed products are 'convenient' – meaning, ready-to-eat (or drink) or ready-to-heat.

The leading branded ultra-processed foods and drinks are manufactured by transnational companies most able to purchase substrates for their products at rock-bottom or even subsidized prices. They penetrate new markets in lower-income countries, with massive marketing and advertising budgets, and may undercut local industries, drive them out of business, or take them over."

I find it interesting that most people know that fast food and processed foods are "not good for you," yet most still choose to eat it. This is in large part due to the intensive advertising campaigns coupled with the habit-forming nature of these foods.

On average, just one serving of a [typical children's breakfast cereal](#) equates to more than 90 percent of the daily sugar intake for sedentary girls aged 9 to 13. Even infant formulas and jarred baby food contains excessive amounts of sugar and high fructose corn syrup -- hooking babies on the unnatural taste of processed foods as soon as they're out of the womb!

In one study of rats fed a diet containing 25 percent sugar, they became anxious when the sugar was removed – displaying [symptoms similar to people going through drug withdrawals](#), such as chattering teeth and the shakes.

The researchers conducting the study found a link between opioids, your brain's 'pleasure chemicals,' and a craving for sweet, salty and fatty foods. It is thought that high-fat foods stimulate the opioids, as when researchers stimulated rats' brains with a synthetic version of the natural opioid enkephalin, the rats ate up to six times their normal intake of fat.

Further, long lasting changes in rats' brain chemistry, similar to those caused by morphine or heroin use, were also noted. According to researchers, this means that even simple exposure to pleasurable foods is enough to change gene expression, which suggests an addiction to the food.

It's easy to forget that the processed, packaged foods and fast food restaurants of today are actually a radical change in terms of the history of food production.

Many people have no idea that the frozen food business didn't begin until the mid-1920s when the General Seafoods Company set up shop and began selling crudely frozen fish fillets, and fast food restaurants didn't get a foot hold until after World War II. TV dinners didn't even come thirty years later around the 1950s ...

Dangerous Food Additives

Eating processed foods is in no way the same as eating pure, unprocessed foods, in taste, nutritional value or the way they interact with your cells on a biological level.

Processed foods often have little nutritional value and are chemically altered to increase the appeal to your taste buds, so they can override your body's signals that would otherwise tell you it's time to stop eating and try something else. They are also loaded with additives that are harmful in their own right, such as:

1. Fructose

Now the number one source of calories in the US, fructose diminishes your feelings of fullness because it does not stimulate a rise in leptin, one of the most powerful hunger- and fat storage regulators in your body. Fructose also reduces the amount of leptin crossing your blood-brain barrier by raising triglycerides.

Leptin resistance, in turn, is perhaps one of the most significant factors underlying human disease. For example, it plays a significant if not primary role in the development of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, autoimmune diseases, reproductive disorders, and perhaps the rate of aging itself.

Additionally, whereas glucose suppresses ghrelin (also known as “the hunger hormone,” which makes you want more food), fructose, again, does not.

Fructose also increases your insulin levels, interfering with the communication between leptin and your hypothalamus, so your pleasure signals aren't extinguished. Your brain keeps sensing that you're starving, and prompts you to eat more.

For the sake of your health, I strongly advise keeping your fructose consumption below 25 grams per day, but this is virtually impossible if you eat a lot of processed foods.

2. Genetically Modified (GM) Ingredients

Some 75 percent of processed foods contain GM ingredients, which are being increasingly linked to serious health problems.

Just last year the American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) reviewed the available research and issued a memorandum recommending that all [doctors prescribe non-GMO diets](#) to all patients because they are causally linked in animal feeding studies to:

- Infertility
- Immune system problems
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Organ damage
- Dysfunctional regulation of cholesterol and insulin

- Accelerated aging

One of the first steps to avoiding GM ingredients is to cut back on processed foods in your diet.

3. MSG

Monosodium glutamate (MSG), a flavor enhancer, is added to thousands of processed (canned soups, crackers, meats, salad dressings, frozen dinners, chips and much more) and restaurant foods.

MSG is so popular because it actually enhances the flavor of foods, making processed meats and frozen dinners taste fresher and smell better, salad dressings more tasty, and canned foods less tinny.

However, it is also an excitotoxin, which means it overexcites your cells to the point of damage or death, causing brain damage to varying degrees -- and potentially even triggering or worsening learning disabilities, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Lou Gehrig's disease and more.

4. Food Additives

More than 3,000 food additives -- preservatives, flavorings, colors and other ingredients -- are added to foods in the United States. While each of these substances are legal to use, whether or not they are entirely safe for long-term consumption -- by themselves or in combination -- is a different story altogether.

Many of them, such as sodium nitrate, BHA, BHT, aspartame, Blue 1, 2, and potassium bromate, have been linked to an increased risk of cancer. Others are estrogen-mimicking xenoestrogens that have been linked to a range of human health effects, including reduced sperm counts in men and increased risk of breast cancer in women.

Studies have also shown that a variety of common food dyes, and the preservative sodium benzoate -- found in many soft drinks, fruit juices and salad dressings -- cause some children to become measurably more hyperactive and distractible.

Meanwhile, E-numbered food dyes (such as tartrazine (E102), ponceau 4R (E124), sunset yellow (E110), carmoisine (E122), quinoline yellow (E104) and allura red AC (E129) do as much damage to children's brains as lead in gasoline, resulting in a significant reduction in IQ.

Fortunately, when you avoid processed foods you'll also automatically avoid virtually every one of these toxic food additives.

If You Only Eat Processed Foods, You're also Missing This...

Raw food!

I believe it's wise to get as much raw food in your diet as possible. I personally try to eat about 85 percent of my food raw, including raw eggs and humanely raised organic animal products that have not been factory farmed. And there are a number of reasons for this.

For starters, processing foods at high temperatures destroys naturally occurring enzymes. Enzymes are proteins -- catalysts to speed up and facilitate reactions in your body. In fact, some biochemical reactions will not even occur without these enzymes (you have about 1,300 of them).

Processed foods are also devoid of biophotons, the smallest physical units of light, which are stored in, and used by all biological organisms -- including your body. Vital sun energy finds its way into your

cells via the food you eat, in the form of these bio-photons.

They contain important information that controls complex vital processes in your body. The bio-photons have the power to order and regulate, and, in doing so, to elevate the organism – in this case, your physical body -- to a higher oscillation or order.

This is manifested as a feeling of vitality and well-being.

The more light a food is able to store, the more nutritious it is. Naturally grown fresh vegetables, for example, and sun-ripened fruits, are rich in light energy. The capacity to store bio-photons is therefore a measure of the quality of your food -- and processed foods contain zero light energy.

You can also read the lead story on [the benefits of raw food in this newsletter](#).

Ditching Processed Foods Can be Easy

Eating fresh, whole foods is the "secret" to getting healthier, losing weight and really enjoying your food, but many believe it's next to impossible to eat nowadays without processed foods.

Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough have tackled this issue head-on in their book [Real Food Has Curves](#), which is a great starting point to "relearn" the basics of how to enjoy and prepare real, healthy food.

Many people are under the mistaken impression that cooking from scratch is an extremely complicated affair that takes lots of time and costs more than they could possibly afford. More often than not, this is simply not true.

Once you get the hang of it, you'll find you can [whip up a healthful meal from scratch](#) in the same amount of time it would have taken you to drive down the street to pick up fast food. Of course, you'll be far more satisfied when you eat your home-cooked meal, both physically and mentally.

Finding the time, and the financial resources, to make healthy meals for your family can be challenging, but please don't use these as excuses to exist on processed food.

Your health -- your energy levels, your appearance, your mood and so many other factors -- will improve when you [eat the foods your body was designed for](#). Returning to a diet of locally grown, fresh whole foods is really the only way to reach optimal health.

A major leap forward would be to strive for a diet of 90 percent *non-processed* food and only 10 percent from other sources. For a step-by-step guide to make this a reality in your own life, simply [follow the advice in my optimized nutrition plan](#).

Final Words of Wisdom

Please remember that someone has to spend some time in the kitchen to prepare your meals, whether it is you, your spouse, a relative, friend, or a chef. If you ignore this basic principle you can be strongly assured your health will suffer.

The other point to consider is that if you fail to plan you are planning to fail. It is no mystery that when noon comes around you will likely want lunch. So why not figure out what that will be the night before you go to sleep. Seek to make a habit of knowing what you will eat the next day so you can be prepared and won't have to rely on fast food or junk food.