

How Bad Are Ultraprocessed Foods?

今回は、身近な食生活を見直すきっかけになるニュースです。アメリカの研究によれば、スナック菓子やファストフードといった「超加工食品」を多く摂取する人ほど、肥満や糖尿病などのリスクが高まる可能性があるとのこと。日本でも「メタボ」という言葉が広く使われていますが、これは「メタボリックシンドローム（代謝症候群）」の略称で、生活習慣病のリスクが高い状態を指します。英語の「metabolism」は、体がエネルギーを生み出す「代謝」自体を意味します。記事を読んで、健康的な食生活を送るためにはどうすれば良いか講師と話してみましよう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Most Americans eat ultraprocessed foods every day. These are foods that you cannot make at home because they contain flavors and chemicals that change the taste or feel of the food.

Such food may also go through preparation methods that are not possible in a home kitchen. They are usually high in salt, sugar and fat. Americans may eat them in the form of sugary cereals at breakfast, frozen pizzas at dinner, and in-between bites like potato chips, sodas and ice cream.

Ultraprocessed foods make up about 60 percent of the American diet. For children and teenagers, it is even higher – about two-thirds of what they eat.

Scientists have connected eating ultraprocessed foods to poor health results. Being overweight is one such result and that may lead to diabetes and heart disease. Other possible health risks include depression and dementia. One recent study suggested that eating these foods may raise the risk of early death.

Nutrition science is complex, though, and most research so far has found connections -- not **proof** -- regarding the health effects of these foods.

Food manufacturers argue that processing increases food safety and food supplies. They say it also offers a low-cost, easy way to provide a diverse and nutritious diet.

The Associated Press asked several nutrition experts to explain these foods so that people can make informed choices.

What are ultraprocessed foods?

Most foods are processed, whether it is by freezing, grinding, fermentation, pasteurization or other **means**. In 2009, Brazilian epidemiologist Carlos Monteiro and his team first proposed a way to classify foods by how much they are processed, not by their nutrient content. This is called the Nova classification system. It is used by international bodies like the World Health Organization.

Kevin Hall is a researcher who studies **metabolism** and diet at the National Institutes of Health. He said that foods at the top of the Nova four-level scale are foods prepared with industrial processes and ingredients such as additives, colors and preservatives that you could not use in a home kitchen.

"These are most, but not all, of the packaged foods you see," Hall said.

Are ultraprocessed foods harmful?

Not all processing is unhealthy, Hall noted. Whole-grain bread, yogurt, tofu and infant formula are all highly processed, for example. But they are also nutritious.

Still, many studies suggest that diets high in ultraprocessed foods are tied to poor health results. The exact cause is still unclear.

Hall and his partners carried out a small study with 20 people who came to live at a health center for a month. Some of the people ate ultraprocessed foods, while others ate unprocessed foods. The two groups got the same amount of calories, sugar, fat, fiber and nutrients for two weeks. They could eat as much as they liked.

When people ate the diet of ultraprocessed foods, they took in about 500 calories per day more than when they ate unprocessed foods, researchers found. They gained an average of about 1 kilogram during the study period. People who ate only unprocessed foods for the same amount of time lost about 1 kilogram.

A new study is currently taking place and its results should appear next year.

Should ultraprocessed foods be regulated?

Dr. Neena Prasad is director of the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Food Policy Program. She said such foods are often made to be both low-cost and very tasty.

"You just can't stop eating them," Prasad said. She said she believes leaders have enough facts to change policies. This could mean raising taxes on sugary drinks, limiting salt in these foods and controlling how advertisers sell the foods to children.

Earlier this year, Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Robert Califf told a group of food policy experts that ultraprocessed foods are a complex subject. However, Califf said, "We've got to have the scientific basis and then we've got to [follow through](#)."

How should consumers manage ultraprocessed foods at home?

Aviva Musicus is science director for the Center for Science in the Public Interest. She said buyers should check information printed on food containers and make choices based on the current U.S. Dietary Guidelines.

"We have really good [evidence](#) that added sugar is not great for us. We have evidence that high-sodium foods are not great for us," she said.

Musicus added, "We have great evidence that fruits and vegetables which are minimally processed are really good for us."

I'm Jill Robbins.

Jonel Aleccia reported this story for the Associated Press. Jill Robbins adapted it for Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. proof (n.) facts that show a claim or argument is true

Police discovered proof of the crime in the form of fingerprints and phone records.

2. means (n.) the resources for doing something

I'd like to start a computer repair business, but I don't have the means yet.

3. metabolism (n.) the ability of the body to process food and produce energy

Regular exercise can speed up your metabolism.

4. follow through (v.) to continue an explanation or argument to its logical end

It is important to follow through on a logical argument with facts that show it is true.

5. evidence (n.) facts that show a claim or argument is true; proof

So far, there is no evidence of life on other worlds.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What are the characteristics of ultraprocessed foods?
2. What did researcher Kevin Hall's study find?
3. What advice does Aviva Musicus give for shopping for food?
4. Dr. Neena Prasad claims, "You just can't stop eating them [ultraprocessed foods]." Do you agree?
5. What kinds of ultraprocessed foods are part of your diet, and how many of them are healthy?