



National Senior Games Association

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Humana®

Processed Foods Are Making Us Sick



Written by: Heather Sumpter

Many of us are so busy that quick, convenient meals feel like the only option. Processed foods have become a staple in the western diet; in fact, they account for 60% of the products we buy at the grocery store¹. **Processed foods** are those that contain additives, preservatives, genetically modified materials, hormones and other unnatural materials that compromise the original structure of the food. There are plenty of negative health consequences associated with an increase in consumption of processed foods:

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are used in food producing animals which promotes the prevalence of many of the antibiotic resistant bacteria transmitted commonly by food. Treating animals with antibiotics allows antibiotic-resistant bacteria to thrive while susceptible bacteria are suppressed or die.²

High Amounts of Sugar and High Fructose Corn Syrup

It's well known that excess sugar can lead to conditions including: diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and cancer. The fructose in processed foods actually can program your body to crave more food and store fat. The liver processes the fructose and consuming it in excess can have the same affects as alcohol on the liver. Your body also breaks down the fructose into fat leading to obesity and related diseases.³

High in Trans Fat and Vegetable Oils

The term partially hydrogenated oils is typically the form of trans-fat found in processed foods.⁴ Trans-fat is known to promote inflammation, which is a common catalyst for chronic conditions. Additionally, processed vegetable oils may cause clogging of the arteries, as it raises bad cholesterol which can lead to heart disease.

Highly Addictive and Low in Nutrients:

Processed foods are known to trigger feel good sensors in your brain. Because processed foods change or remove important nutrients in the food, your body is never satisfied. This causes your mind to eat more of it in order to feel happy and full. Because these foods are often low in nutrients, over consumption can leave your body in a malnourished state.



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It's not yet completely known to what extent that manufactured ingredients have on our health. It is best to consume mostly whole natural foods to meet your needs. Consult with your healthcare provider before making any major changes to your diet.

1. <https://www.yahoo.com/health/study-reveals-the-horrifying-amount-of-processed-115060139022.html>
2. <http://www.cdc.gov/narms/animals.html>
3. <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2014/02/12/9-dangers-processed-foods.aspx>
4. http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/HealthyEating/Trans-Fats_UCM_301120_Article.jsp

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Heather is a Community Health Educator for Humana at Home, in which she provides education and community resources to members based on requests and needs. Prior to her role with Humana at Home, she held numerous other qualified positions, including Clinical Health Coordinator at Coventry Health Center and Group Exercise Instructor and Personal Trainer at the Jewish Community Center. She received a Master of Science in Exercise Physiology and a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science from the University of Pittsburgh. Her background and education make her a vital member of the Editorial Board.

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