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**A good health reason to avoid ‘ultraprocessed’ foods**

by Live Science March 14

Some good health reasons for avoiding ‘ultraprocessed’ foods

“Ultraprocessed” foods make up more than half of all calories in the average American diet and account for nearly 90 percent of all added sugars, a [new study finds](http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/3/e009892).

Ultraprocessed foods were defined as “formulations of several ingredients” that, besides sugar, salt, oils and fats, included such additives as flavors, colors, sweeteners and emulsifiers.

This ultraprocessed classification included breads; soft drinks, fruit drinks and milk-based drinks; cakes, cookies and pies; salty snacks; frozen foods; and pizza and breakfast cereals, according to the study, which was published last week.

The researchers also found that the more ultraprocessed foods that people eat, the more likely they are to exceed the recommended daily limit for added sugars in the diet. (The new Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that calories from sugars should account for no more than 10 percent of a person’s daily calories. For someone who eats 2,000 calories a day, this would mean no more than 200 calories should be from added sugars.)

“Limiting the consumption of ultraprocessed foods may be a highly effective way to decrease added sugars,” wrote the researchers, who were led by Euridice Martinez Steele, a researcher at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil. Consuming too much added sugar is “most likely contributing” to growing levels of obesity, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease, they added.

In addition to ultraprocessed foods, the researchers looked at the amounts of unprocessed or minimally processed foods, processed culinary ingredients and processed foods in the average American’s diet.

Unprocessed or minimally processed foods include meat, fruits, vegetables, fish and grains; processed culinary ingredients include table sugar, plant oils and animal fats. Processed foods (defined as unprocessed or minimally processed foods manufactured with added salt, sugar or other culinary substances) include such foods as cheese, canned foods and salted meats.

The researchers found that unprocessed or minimally processed foods contributed to, on average, 29.6 percent of a person’s total daily calories; processed foods contributed to 9.4 percent of a person’s total daily calories. Ultraprocessed foods, on the other hand, accounted for 57.9 percent of calories, or nearly 3 out of every 5 calories consumed, the researchers wrote in the study.