

Health & Wellness

July
2026
Issue 22

Effects of Ultra-Processed Foods

This month's Health & Wellness topic is Effects of Ultra-Processed Foods! This issue will go over what is considered an Ultra-Processed Food, why they are a concern, and how to identify them in order to cut back.



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Welcome to DuPage Senior Citizens Council/Kane Senior Council's July Health & Wellness Newsletter!

We're here to bring you a new topic relating to wellness as well as new brain teasers, seasonal recipes, book recommendations, and more!

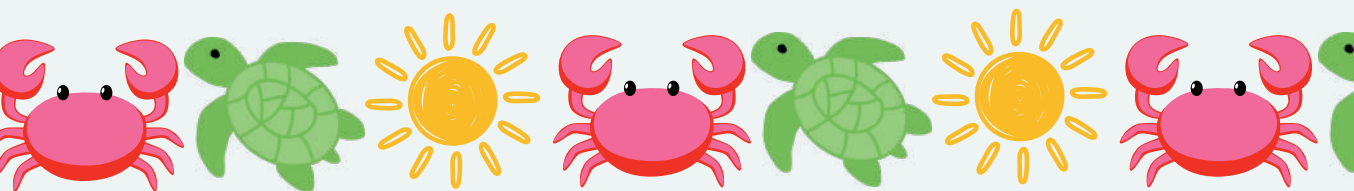
Providing Meals and More...



DuPage Senior
Citizens Council



Kane Senior
Council



Health & Wellness Education

Effects of Ultra-Processed Foods

Introduction

The U.S. faces a growing epidemic of preventable diet-related chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity.

It is estimated that 70% of the U.S. food supply is comprised of foods commonly considered ultra-processed.



Researchers have found links between the consumption of highly processed foods (commonly called ultra-processed foods/UPF) and a range of negative outcomes, including cardiovascular disease, obesity, and certain cancers.

Ultra-processed foods are industrially formulated products made mostly from substances extracted from whole foods or synthesized in labs. They often contain little to no actual whole foods, relying on additives like artificial colors, emulsifiers and high-fructose corn syrup to enhance flavor, texture, and shelf life.

Why Are They a Concern?

UPFs account for over half of the average American's daily caloric intake, and have a negative impact on human health.

Health Risks: High consumption is linked to an increased risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, and cognitive decline. A study links high intake to a higher risk of developing dementia as well.

Hyper-palatability: These foods are specifically designed to stimulate the brain's reward system, making them highly appealing and sometimes addictive.

Reduced Satiety: Industrial processing alters food structures making them softer and easier to eat, which can override your body's natural fullness signals and lead to overeating.

Common Examples

Most packaged or ready-to-eat products in the supermarket fall under this category.

- Soft drinks and energy drinks
- Packaged cookies, cakes, and candy
- Fast-food items like burgers, fries, and chicken nuggets
- Pre-packaged, ready-made meals and frozen dinners
- Instant noodles and instant soups
- Processed meats like hot dogs and deli meats
- Sweetened breakfast cereals

How to Identify Them:

The most common way to categorize foods is by using the NOVA Food Classification System, which groups foods based on the extent of their processing:

Unprocessed or minimally processed foods:	Fresh, dried, or frozen whole foods with no added substances (e.g. fresh vegetables, plain milk)
Processed culinary ingredients:	Substances extracted from whole foods and used in home kitchens (e.g. butter, olive oil, salt)
Processed foods:	Products made by adding salt, oil, or sugar to whole foods (e.g. canned tuna, artisanal cheeses)
Ultra-processed foods:	Industrial formulations containing ingredients and additives not typically used in home cooking (e.g. high-fructose corn syrup, modified starches, hydrogenated oils)

How Can I Cut Back on Ultra-Processed Foods?

Cook More Often

- One major change in dietary patterns in the last 70 years has been the decline of home cooked meals, and the increase in ultra-processed foods.
- Cook at home more often, without using ultra-processed ingredients (heating up frozen pizza doesn't count).

Dine with Friends and Family

- Real food, real talk, good company. That's a winning combination for dinner. Studies show that people who dine together have better eating habits, including enjoying more vegetables, fewer soft drinks, and less deep-fried food.

Dine Out on Better Choices

- Restaurant meals can be fresh and healthy. Although there are always less healthy options they don't need to be ultra-processed options.
- Challenge yourself to fill half your plate with vegetables wherever you dine, and choose items that are baked, poached, stir-fried or grilled rather than deep-fried.

Consider the Source

- Think about where your food comes from.
- A steak comes from a cow and apples grow on trees. If you have trouble figuring out where a food originated because it has been so highly manipulated, consider if it nourishes your body at all, it probably doesn't.

Don't Be Swayed by Hype

- Be wary of deceptive food marketing and advertising.
- Ultra-processed foods are often marketed as “healthy”, “natural” and “organic”. While these words may describe the original ingredients, they often don't refer to the process of how the food was made
- Keep in mind, an organic, natural cookie is still an ultra-processed food.

Health & Wellness Education

WRAP UP

Eating fresh, unprocessed, whole food will do a lot of good for your body...

...including reducing your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and stroke.

For more health and wellness tips, information and resources, visit our website.



BRAIN BOOSTERS

SUDOKU

	9					5		3
8		3	5	6				1
5					4		6	
1				7	9			2
	5	9				4	7	
7			4	3				8
	8		9					5
2				4	7	6		9
9		6					8	

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Fill in the blank squares so that each row, each column and each 3-by-3 block contain all of the digits 1 thru 9.

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

*What kind of room has no walls,
doors, or windows?*

WORD SEARCH

R	J	U	P	R	O	C	E	S	S	E	D	W	Y
C	A	R	D	I	O	V	A	S	C	U	L	A	R
I	S	A	T	I	E	T	Y	D	X	T	N	L	J
N	U	C	U	L	I	N	A	R	Y	D	W	D	E
D	C	K	G	Y	X	R	A	G	U	C	L	A	X
U	P	A	L	A	T	A	B	I	L	I	T	Y	A
S	C	F	V	O	O	E	X	O	W	G	N	G	G
T	P	O	W	I	D	S	L	K	U	J	K	L	E
R	W	C	O	N	S	U	M	E	Y	L	I	K	W
I	V	L	W	K	F	U	P	Z	E	P	T	X	R
A	U	Z	I	N	I	J	D	I	G	C	C	R	Q
L	Y	I	U	V	Y	N	C	B	D	Q	H	C	A
D	I	N	E	V	C	J	G	K	R	J	E	L	N
S	U	B	S	T	A	N	C	E	S	Y	N	G	R

WORD BANK

Ultra

Processed

Cooking

Consume

Industrial

Palatability

Dine

Cardiovascular

Culinary

Substances

Kitchen

Satiety



Our Picks of the Month

July Recipe: Fruit and Yogurt Parfaits

Recipe from: Feel Good Foodie

Ingredients:

- 1 cup strawberries, sliced
- ½ cup blueberries
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup granola
- 1 cup full fat greek yogurt



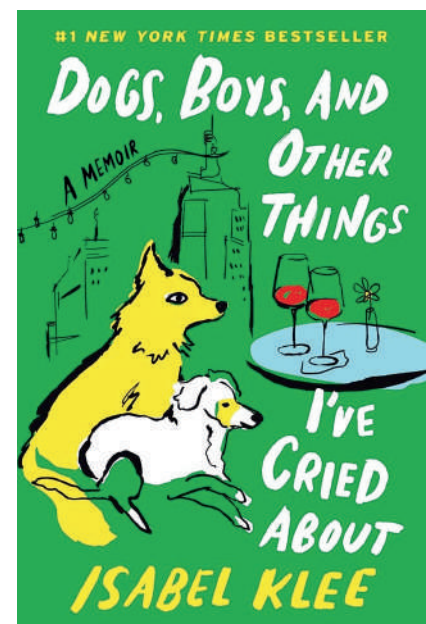
Directions:

1. Add the strawberries and sugar in a medium bowl and stir to combine. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes or overnight.
2. Divide half the strawberries into two clear glasses.
3. Add half the Greek yogurt on top.
4. Add half the blueberries on top.
5. Add all the granola on top.
6. Repeat with one more layer of strawberries, one more layer of Greek yogurt, and one more layer of blueberries.
7. Serve immediately for best consistency.

Book Pick of the Month

***Dogs, Boys, and Other Things I've Cried About: A Memoir* by Isabel Klee**

Stories about how Isabel found her passion for rehabilitating and fostering rescue dogs, and helping them get adopted. Interwoven with tales about her relationships in New York City and how she found true love in her dog, Simon.



ANSWER KEY

6	9	4	7	8	1	5	2	3
8	7	3	5	6	2	9	4	1
5	2	1	3	9	4	8	6	7
1	4	8	6	7	9	3	5	2
3	5	9	1	2	8	4	7	6
7	6	2	4	3	5	1	9	8
4	8	7	9	1	6	2	3	5
2	3	5	8	4	7	6	1	9
9	1	6	2	5	3	7	8	4

R J U P R O C E S S E D W Y
 C A R D I O V A S C U L A R
 I S A T I E T Y D X T N L J
 N U C U L I N A R Y D W D E
 D C K G Y X R A G U C L A X
 U P A L A T A B I L I T Y A
 S C F V O O E X O W G N G G
 T P O W I D S L K U J K L E
 R W C O N S U M E Y L I K W
 I V L W K F U P Z E P T X R
 A U Z I N I J D I G C C R Q
 L Y I U V Y N C B D Q H C A
 D I N E V C J G K R J E L N
 S U B S T A N C E S Y N G R

Riddle Answer:

What kind of room has no walls, doors, or windows?

Answer: A Mushroom



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