



Processed Food Is Associated With Higher Cancer Risk

One of the best things you can do for your health, in my view, is avoid processed foods and eat only minimally processed, whole foods. Besides helping you stay lean, they may help you avoid cancer, since processed food is associated with higher cancer risk.

Ultra-processed food and cancer

A new study found that [consumption of ultra-processed food is associated with greater risk of cancer](#).

First of all, what are “ultra-processed foods”? Virtually all food that we eat is processed in some way; even if you hunt for your food, meat must be cut and cooked. Most of our food has seen the inside of a processing plant of some kind. Dairy products are pasteurized, some are fermented. Etc.

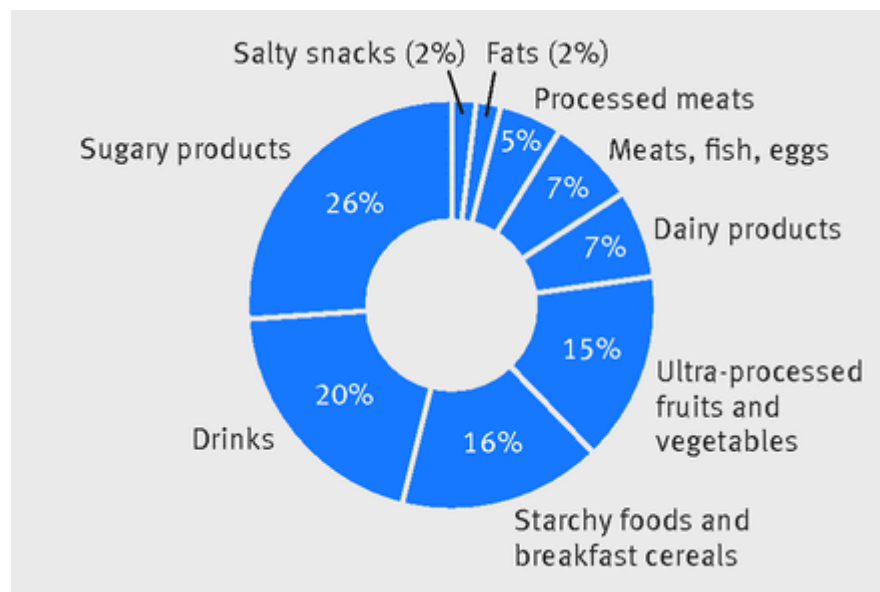
Ultra-processed foods are those that we would normally deem just “processed”. The study defines ultra-processed foods as:

mass produced packaged breads and buns; sweet or savoury packaged snacks; industrialised confectionery and desserts; sodas and sweetened drinks; meat balls, poultry and fish nuggets, and other reconstituted meat products transformed with addition of preservatives other than salt (for example, nitrites); instant noodles and soups; frozen or shelf stable ready meals; and other food products made mostly or entirely from sugar, oils and fats, and other substances not commonly used in culinary preparations such as hydrogenated oils, modified starches, and protein isolates. Industrial processes notably include hydrogenation, hydrolysis,

extruding, moulding, reshaping, and pre-processing by frying. Flavouring agents, colours, emulsifiers, humectants, non-sugar sweeteners, and other cosmetic additives are often added to these products to imitate sensorial properties of unprocessed or minimally processed foods and their culinary preparations or to disguise undesirable qualities of the final product.

These are basically what you find in the middle aisles of the supermarket or in a fast-food restaurant.

Relative amounts of each type of food in the study:



They found that each 10% increase in the proportion of ultra-processed food consumed was associated with about a 10% increase in cancer risk. While that may not sound like a lot, I reckon many people eat a large proportion of their food as ultra-processed food, so they may have a much higher cancer risk.

The study showed association only, and causation is not proven.

The study's authors suggested several mechanisms by which this food may cause cancer, including, additives and poor nutritional quality. Other ways they suggested that ring true (to me) are that they cause obesity, which raises the risk of cancer, and they cause a greater glycaemic response, with higher blood glucose and insulin, which likely also raises the risk of cancer.

Here's an example of whole, unprocessed food, one demonized by the health establishment:



Here's an example of ultra-processed food, one promoted by the health establishment:



In my opinion, you should do the opposite of what the health establishment recommends here.

PS: Another way to avoid cancer is to [Muscle Up](#).

