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## A Review on Impact of Junk Food on Health

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### ABSTRACT:

Premature aging and degradative processes are mainly generated by unhealthy habits and an unbalanced diet. Quality of food and lifestyle are important factors in sano-genesis. Many imbalances and ailments have their origin in the adoption of an unbalanced diet and a disordered lifestyle. With the help of a transversal study carried out on the basis of a questionnaire, the consumption of junk food products among the population of Romania was evaluated; at the same time, an evaluation of the characteristics of the associated diet, as well as a series of lifestyle components (quality of rest, physical activity, evaluation of the state of health) was carried out. The data collected and processed indicate an increased tendency to consume junk food products in the 18–23 age group, and especially among obese respondents. Female respondents show a lower tendency toward an increased consumption of junk food products (OR = 0.703, 95% CI)—0.19–0.95, p = 0.011) compared to male respondents. The most consumed junk food products are fried potatoes (46.2%) and pastries (41.4%). Junk food products that show an increased tendency toward consumption addiction are fried potatoes (13.8%), sweets (12.4%), pastry products (11.1%), and sweetened drinks (11.2%). The poor quality of food from a nutritional point of view, and reduced physical activity, are reflected in the varied range of problems faced by the respondents: states of fatigue (62.4%), nervousness (37.5%), depression, anxiety, emotional eating, etc.

**Keywords:** Junk food, Cholesterol, Fat, Salt, Sugar, Obesity, healthy diet, fast food, ultra-processed foods, sweetened drinks, metabolic diseases, public health, food safety.

### INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) draws attention to the danger of the excessive consumption of unhealthy foods and drinks, which represents an important risk factor for non-communicable diseases (NCDs)]. Junk food and sweetened and alcoholic drinks are included in the category of foods with a major risk for metabolic syndrome, which is complicated with serious consequences for health, and even the risk of premature death in the case of long-term excessive consumption associated with an unbalanced and sedentary lifestyle. These food products are characterized by a hypercaloric content, and being low in nutrients and rich in additives.

According to the country profile regarding the health of the Romanian population, published in 2021, and based on national statistics provided by Eurostat and OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), the life expectancy in Romania is among the lowest in the European Union (EU), with cardiovascular diseases representing the main causes of death. Unhealthy behavior accounts for nearly half of all deaths, and the rate of reported alcohol consumption and unhealthy eating among the population is above the European average. The mortality from treatable causes is double the European average, and the avoidable mortality ranks third in the EU, being mainly caused by cardiovascular diseases, lung cancer, and excessive alcohol consumption.

The main causes of Romanian deaths are represented by behavioral and environmental risk factors, especially an unhealthy diet (25%), excessive tobacco consumption (17%), excessive alcohol consumption (7%), a sedentary lifestyle (2%), and pollution (7%). Numerous studies indicate the presence of pollutants in high concentrations in certain food products, causing serious alarm bells related to their safety in consumption. Unhealthy eating is characterized by a low consumption of vegetables and fruits, and a high consumption of sugar and salt. This causes a reduced consumption of fibers, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals, which are valuable nutrients in the

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optimal functioning of the body. The rate of obesity among Romanian children has also increased recently; according to 2018 statistics, one in five children aged 15 is obesity.

Nutrition is of particular importance in maintaining good health, in the correct and harmonious development of the body, and in the prevention of certain ailments, and nutritional therapy plays a complementary part in the healing of various ailments. A healthy diet is one in which macronutrients are consumed in proportions that are adequate to support energy and physiological needs, without an excessive intake, while providing sufficient micronutrients and hydration to meet the body's physiological needs.

Macronutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, and lipids) provide the energy necessary for the cellular processes required for daily functioning. Micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) are required in relatively small amounts for the growth, development, metabolism, and normal physiological functioning of the body.

A healthy diet combined with a daily exercise program and a sufficient amount of sleep, helps to maintain the body weight within normal limits, as well as to reduce the risk of many chronic diseases, such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, dental, diabetes, cancer, skeletal diseases, etc.

## 2. Problems with junk food

### Increased fat:

Junk foods, for example, burgers, pizza, seared chicken and chips generally heaps of soaked fats, an excess of immersed fat in diet will make individuals put on weight and being overweight is a hazard to the wellbeing of the heart and causes other infections.

### Increased salt content:

Junk regularly has an excess of salt. There is a great deal of salt as of now in food, for example, bread, breakfast oats and rolls. So individuals are getting more salt than they need when they eat junk food. An excess of salt is undesirable for a healthy life.

### Increased sugar content:

Soda pops, cordials, bread rolls, cakes and lollipop likewise have heaps of sugar that is the thing that makes them taste excessively great yet an excess of sugar makes individuals fat, decays the teeth, is awful for the blood and may cause other diseases. Junk food has some of beneficial things that the body requirements for good wellbeing as the body needs some salt, fat and sugar for vitality to consume while we play and work be that as it may a lot of fat, salt and sugar is terrible for wellbeing. Individuals tend to settle their dinners by devouring inexpensive food in their spare time. Scientists have indicated that junk food may cause dyslexia, ADHD (consideration shortfall hyperactivity issue) what's more, might be chemical imbalance

## 3. Why is junk food more preferred?

Junk food contains whatever is fast, delectable, helpful and in vogue. Astute junk food advertising and the bait of comfort In addition to taste, they drag individuals to junk food addiction.

Following factors for the most part makes it engaging:

1. Time-Junk food addiction is so high due to its effortlessness. They are simple to get ready and ready to devour inside in no time.
2. Tasty food-Great taste additionally, is another significant motivation to a degree that impacts to choose junk food. This taste is inferable from luxurious utilization of oils, salts as well as sugar.
3. Attractive-Packing of such foods has an appealing appearance by adding food additives and hues in addition to improving the flavor.
4. Advertisement- Advertising<sup>11</sup> has a significant job in drawing in the general population, especially kids and adolescents<sup>12</sup> to the junk food selling joints.

## 4. Why should junk food be avoided?

### Lack of energy:

This is known as transient adverse impact coming about because of eating junk food as junk food don't give the fundamental supplements (like nutrients, protein and fibers) despite the The fact that they can especially do the trick, makes people feel debilitated.

### Reduction of concentration:

This is another consequence of junk food propensity. These are followed to impact in quick and medium term periods when people groups have a lavish junk supper wealthy in oil they feel tired and neglect to think.

### Increased cholesterol:

Over continued times of junk food eating blood flow drop because of fat collection, absence of crucial oxygen, supplements and protein especially can stale their synapses briefly aside from shaping plaques and contracting conduits cholesterol likewise influences the liver where it is processed. High cholesterol because of junk food and diet strains liver harming it at last. This is a long haul impact.

**Heart disease:**

Junk food diet is a significant reason for heart maladies (Myocardial localized necrosis) because of plaque development in corridors which requests heart to invest additional push to siphon blood on the downstream, on the upstream there is absence of returning blood to heart, this makes two harms heart–heart exhausts because of consistent additional exertion and it endured in oxygen gracefully.

**Lack of nutrition:**

The healthy benefit of junk food is around one in a size of 1 to 10, which is the least. The healthy benefit is lost during the time spent creating the junk food so engineered nutrients and minerals are added to repay it, however they are bad contrasted with regular nutrients and minerals.

**High chemical content:**

Junk food has loads of compound additives which are most certainly not valuable to the body, things that resemble counterfeit shading and additives. MSG and tartrazine is in practically all kind of junk food and a wide range of clinical examinations have uncovered that MSG causes corpulence and other terrible things. All the methods used to process the junk food for canning, drying out and freezing, practically obliterate the kind of food so synthetic concoctions under the pretense of 'regular flavor' have been added to lacquer the flavor, while shading additives are added to make food new. It may make the food look and taste better however it is unsafe to our bodies. Reduced oxygen supply Junk food is wealthy in fat so collection of fat can takes place in bronchioles so oxygen flexibly tends to diminished in body which can cause some respiratory issue.

**5. Disease caused by junk food at different ages****1. Children:**

Dental cavities: Junk food causes dental cavities in children because bacteria in their mouths feed on the sugars and starches from these foods, producing acids that erode tooth enamel. Sticky or acidic snacks like candy, soft drinks, and chips prolong this exposure, weakening teeth and making them more vulnerable to decay. Sticky residue, Many processed snacks are sticky and can get lodged in the gaps between teeth, providing a food source for bacteria and making it harder to remove plaque and debris. Acid production, Sugars and carbohydrates in junk food are metabolized by oral bacteria into acids. These acids demineralize and erode the tooth's enamel, the protective outer layer.

**Digestive issues:**

Constipation: a diet high in junk food can cause constipation in children because it is often low in fiber and high in fat, sugar, and processed ingredients, which can lead to hard, dry stools. Not drinking enough water is another major factor, as it helps soften stool for easier passage. Junk food is low in fiber, which is essential for bowel regularity. This lack of fiber can lead to constipation, where stool is hard and difficult to pass.

**Bloating and gas:**

Junk foods like processed snacks and fried items are often low in fiber, which is essential for regular digestion. A lack of fiber can lead to constipation, which in turn causes bloating and gas. Foods like pizza, chips, and burgers are high in sodium and trans fats. Sodium causes the body to retain water, leading to bloating and abdominal discomfort, while trans fats can irritate the stomach lining and slow down digestion. Many junk foods and drinks are high in sugar and can contain artificial sweeteners. High sugar content, especially from sources like soda and juice, can lead to diarrhea and gas.

**Stomach pain and indigestion:** The high fat and spicy ingredients in many junk foods can irritate the stomach lining, leading to stomach aches, and causing indigestion. Some children may have intolerances or sensitivities to certain ingredients or additives commonly found in processed foods, such as dairy, sugar, or preservatives. Occasionally, junk food can contain low-quality ingredients or be prepared with poor hygiene, which can lead to stomach upset or infections.

**Diarrhea and vomiting:**

In some cases, overconsumption of junk food and sugary drinks can lead to symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, and foul-smelling gas. Refined sugars and excessive sweeteners in processed foods, sweets, and sugary drinks can lead to a "sugar stomach," causing bloating, gas, diarrhea, and stomach pain as the body struggles to process it. Greasy and fatty foods can cause diarrhea because the fat is broken down in the large intestine, releasing extra fluids that trigger diarrhea.

**2. Adults:****Weight gain and obesity:**

Junk foods are often energy dense high in calories but nutrient poor low in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. This means you can consume a large number of calories without feeling full or satisfied, leading to excess calorie

intake. High sugar intake can cause high insulin levels, which are linked to obesity and can lead to insulin resistance. Foods like cookies, chips, and sugary drinks are high in fat and sugar but lack fiber and other micronutrients. A lack of fiber means you stay less full and are more likely to overeat.

#### **Cardiovascular diseases:**

Junk food can cause cardiovascular disease in adults, primarily by increasing the risk factors like obesity, high blood pressure, and inflammation. High sugar and refined carbohydrates can cause rapid spikes in blood sugar and insulin, followed by crashes. Over time, this can contribute to insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome, and weight gain. The high sodium content in many junk foods can cause fluid retention and directly impact blood vessel function, leading to high blood pressure and cause hypertension. Excessive sugar intake can lead to weight gain, which increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes. Sugar also contributes to inflammation in the body.

#### **Kidney problems:**

Junk foods are typically high in sodium (salt), which can lead to high blood pressure (hypertension). Hypertension is a leading cause of kidney disease because it puts extra strain on the tiny blood vessels in the kidneys, reducing their ability to filter waste effectively. Excessive sugar and calorie intake from junk food contributes to weight gain, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. High blood sugar levels can damage the kidneys' filters over time, leading to diabetic kidney disease. One study even suggests that a high-fat/junk food diet may cause kidney damage to the same extent as type 2 diabetes. Foods high in animal protein, phosphorus, and potassium, which are common in processed and fast foods, can put a heavy burden on the kidneys as they work harder to eliminate waste products and maintain mineral balance in the blood.

#### **Type 2 diabetes:**

High sugar and refined carbohydrate intake can lead to insulin resistance, a key factor in developing type 2 diabetes. Due to the presence of high calories but low in nutrients, leading to excess calorie intake and weight gain, especially around the abdomen. Obesity is a major risk factor for type 2 diabetes. Frequent consumption of sugary drinks and high-carb snacks causes blood sugar to spike. This forces the pancreas to produce a lot of insulin, and over time, this can lead to insulin resistance, where the body's cells don't respond to insulin properly, causing high blood sugar levels.

#### **Fatty liver disease:**

The liver's primary role is to process fats and sugars. Junk food is high in calories, refined carbohydrates, and especially fructose, which the liver metabolizes and converts into fat. Junk food is often high in calories, saturated fats, and refined sugars, especially fructose from sources like soft drinks and sweets. The liver is responsible for processing these, and when there is an excess, it converts the extra sugar into fat. The liver performs a process called de novo lipogenesis, where it converts carbohydrates (like those in junk food) into fatty acids and triglycerides. These fats are then stored in the liver, causing fat accumulation. A diet high in junk food can lead to insulin resistance, a condition where the body's cells don't respond properly to insulin. This can cause the liver to store even more fat.

### **3. Older adults ( 60+ years):**

#### **Malnutrition disease:**

Malnutrition is not a single disease but a condition that can lead to or be caused by many, including protein-energy malnutrition like kwashiorkor and marasmus, vitamin and mineral deficiency disorders such as scurvy, rickets, and anemia, and overnutrition-related diseases like obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. Chronic illnesses like cancer, COPD, and Crohn's disease can also cause malnutrition. Junk food can lead to malnutrition through nutrient deficiencies, as it is often high in calories but low in essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber. This can result in diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Furthermore, a diet heavy in junk food can cause digestive problems, anemia, and issues like asthma and other atopic disorders.

#### **Chronic disease:**

Chronic diseases are long-lasting health conditions, often lasting 3 months or longer, that generally cannot be cured but can be managed. They are caused by a combination of genetic, environmental, physiological, and behavioral factors, and include conditions like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases. Chronic diseases caused by junk food include obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease like high blood pressure and cholesterol, kidney damage, and certain cancers. These are linked to junk food's high content of unhealthy fats, sugar, salt, and low levels of essential nutrients, fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

**Cognitive disorder:**

Cognitive disorders that impair mental processes like memory, attention, and thinking, interfering with daily life. Common examples include Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, stroke, and dementia with Lewy bodies. These can result from neurological damage, aging, and other medical conditions such as traumatic brain injury, infections, and substance abuse. Cognitive decline can be caused by junk food, as it triggers inflammation and impairs brain function through unhealthy fats, refined sugars, and additives. A diet high in junk food can lead to issues with memory, learning, and focus, with negative effects on the hippocampus, a key area for memory. This can happen even after short-term consumption and is linked to an increased risk of cognitive impairment.

**Weakened immune system:**

A weakened immune system, also called immunosuppression, means the body has a reduced ability to fight infections and diseases due to factors like poor diet, lack of sleep, stress, smoking, and excessive alcohol. It can also result from medical conditions such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, and diabetes, as well as certain medications and genetic disorders. Symptoms can include frequent infections, slow wound healing, and skin issues. Junk food weakens the immune system by causing chronic inflammation, reducing nutrient intake, and impairing immune cell function. Junk food negatively impacts immunity by causing chronic inflammation, which can impair the body's ability to fight infections, and by creating nutritional deficiencies that weaken immune responses.

**6. Reducing junk food mainly in children:**

Since junk food and youngsters have an odd proclivity to one another, attempt to keep away from youngsters to get habituated to such foods.

1. Controlling youngsters from eating junk foods in schools is another progression that helps in the long term. School administration alongside guardians has joined
2. Obligation to teach youngsters about staying away from junk foods in school premises.
3. Junk food the name itself is enticing enough. Disposing the enticement is one way to stay away from it. Keeping great food close by and having dinners exactly on schedule absolutely helps in this bearing.
4. Creating mindfulness for wellness will surely isolate junk food and a great eating routine. As cited in an article Wanted youngster lock for junk food in The Telegraph distributed on sixteenth February 2009, Calcutta Edition by Varuna Verma But instructing guardians about the unsafe impacts of junk food could likewise assist youngsters with kicking the propensity .
5. The World Consumer Rights Day on March 15 will start a crusade against the promotion of undesirable foods to youngsters. Among school youngsters, numerous vital thoughts can be consolidated in schools, for example, Bring organic product at school<sup>23,24</sup> which plans to chop down junk food utilization and its addiction advancing sound food propensities among them. A portion of the school-based exploration and activities can open entryways for recognizing promising methodologies to create fruit and vegetable environment among understudies in school settings.

**7. Conclusion**

Junk food consumption may increase the risk for psychiatric distress and violent behaviors in children and adolescents. Improvement of eating habits toward healthier diets may be an effective approach for improving mental health.

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