

# ARE YOU EATING YOUR WAY TO CANCER?

If you're seeking a life-changing New Year's resolution for 2024, how about boycotting ultra-processed "foods" this year? It might sound drastic, but I assure you it will enhance your health span and lengthen your lifespan.

If you need a little extra incentive to do that, take note of the recently published research study that pushes ultra-processed foods (UPFs) into the cancer danger zone. Spoiler alert, this study is disturbing on so many levels.

We have already accepted that UPFs pose a significant cancer threat, but much of that threat was considered indirect. Becoming overweight or obese (from consumption of calorie dense UPFs) is a well-known risk factor for developing 12 types of cancer, including esophageal cancer.

But this study points to a direct connection. It connects your cancer risk to the amount of UPFs you eat—irrespective of obesity (as a measure of BMI or waste-to-hip ratio).

Turns out, the people who consumed just 10% more UPFs than others in the study had a whopping 23% higher risk of head and neck cancer and a 24% higher risk of esophageal adenocarcinoma. Multiply these implications by considering that 71% of our U.S. food supply is ultra-processed food! And it won't get better any time soon.

Are you wondering how UPFs might stimulate cancer cells to run rampant in your body? Our understanding of the root cause now includes diet-induced chronic inflammation as well as disruption of the gut microbiome from various food additives. Remember that a healthy gut microbiome fortifies your immune system; and a disrupted microbiome, the antithesis.



What ingredient(s) among the UPFs are the disrupters, you ask? It's impossible to tease out the culprits from the huge plethora of approved food additives such as artificial flavors, sweeteners, thickeners, emulsifiers, preservatives and other stabilizers that help secure a creepy-long shelf life. In addition, we need to consider toxins from the packaging products and processes.

Don't you wish it was easier to precisely sort the food additives responsible for the cancer risk? Unfortunately, the list of substances that have been either premarket-approved for consumption or on the GRAS list (the acronym for "generally recognized as safe") number in the thousands. If you're a principle in food manufacturing or food lobbying, you might argue that the FDA approval basis for this "approved" list of chemicals has been conservative. But if you're in the wellness circle, you're convinced it's just the opposite. The safety of many of these "food" additives have not been vetted out for long-term human consumption. And historically, once approved they rarely get recalled.

So do yourself a huge favor in 2024. Plan time for food prep at home and make the shift from UPFs to real food. Because you deserve it!



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