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THE FIT FACTOR

LIFESTYLE CHANGE

During the summer months why not change the association of just sitting in front of the TV every night. If you are looking to change the way you look and feel, get yourself out in the fresh air for a walk or cycle. It's a sure way of giving you an instant positive boost.

FITNESS TIP

Core exercise does not just mean your stomach – it includes your pelvis, lower back, hips and abdomen. Strengthening this area will lead to better balance and stability whether in sport or just daily activities. Make sure you concentrate on keeping this area strong.

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SUPER processed food, also known as ultra-processed food, refers to food products that undergo multiple processing steps and contain numerous artificial additives, such as preservatives, flavours, and colourings. These foods are usually high in calories, unhealthy fats, sugar, and sodium, while being low in nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and fibre. The health risks for both adults and children, in the UK, consistently eating these types of foods is damning.

One of the main concerns is its contribution to obesity and weight gain. These foods are often energy-dense, meaning they contain a high number of calories per gram. Studies have shown that individuals who consume a high amount of super processed food have a higher risk of obesity, which in turn increases the likelihood of developing other chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of cancer.

This food is also often low in fibre, which can lead to constipation and other gastrointestinal issues. Additionally, the high content of

unhealthy fats, particularly trans fats and saturated fats can contribute to higher cholesterol levels, increasing the risk of heart disease and strokes in both adults and children.

Consuming large amounts of this type of processed food is also linked to poor overall diet quality. These foods often displace nutrient-rich whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, in our diets. As a result, many of us may not obtain adequate amounts of essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants necessary for maintaining optimal health. This can lead to various deficiencies and compromise our immune system, making us more susceptible to infections and illnesses.

In children, it can have additional detrimental effects on growth and development. These foods are often marketed to children through attractive packaging, advertising, and cartoon characters, which can make them more appealing. However, they lack the necessary nutrients required for proper growth and development. Over time, a diet

heavily reliant on super processed food can lead to stunted growth, poor academic performance, and an increased risk of developing chronic diseases in adulthood.

Unfortunately, they often come with high sugar content which also poses a significant risk to both children and adults. Excessive sugar consumption has been linked to tooth decay and increased weight gain and obesity, these foods often lead to a higher calorie intake without providing a feeling of fullness and overtime can cause major health issues.

Here are five examples of super processed foods along with five healthy alternatives:

SUPER PROCESSED FOODS

Potato chips: These are typically high in unhealthy fats, sodium, and artificial flavours.

Sugary breakfast cereals: Many



> Fresh is still best

breakfast cereals marketed towards children are loaded with added sugars, artificial colours, and flavours.

Frozen pizza:

Most are high in refined carbohydrates, unhealthy fats, sodium, and artificial additives like preservatives and flavour enhancers.

Instant noodles: These noodles are highly processed and usually contain high amounts of sodium, unhealthy oils, and artificial flavours and additives.

Soda: Regular soda is packed with added sugars, high-fructose corn syrup, and artificial additives. It provides empty calories and can contribute to weight gain.

HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES

Baked vegetable chips: Instead of potato chips, you can opt for baked vegetable chips made from thinly sliced vegetables like kale, sweet potatoes, or zucchini. They

are lower in unhealthy fats and provide more vitamins and minerals.

Homemade granola: Make your own granola using whole grains, nuts, seeds, and dried fruits. This way, you can control the amount of added sugars and avoid artificial ingredients.

Homemade whole-wheat pizza: Prepare a pizza using whole wheat crust, fresh vegetables, lean proteins like grilled chicken or tofu, and a moderate amount of cheese. This way, you can increase the fibre content and reduce unhealthy fats and sodium.

Rice or soba noodles with fresh vegetables: Go for rice noodles or soba noodles instead of instant noodles. Cook them with plenty of fresh vegetables, lean proteins, and a homemade sauce to create a healthier and more nutritious meal.

Infused water or herbal tea: Instead of soda, hydrate yourself with infused water by adding fruits, herbs, or cucumber slices to your water. Alternatively, opt for herbal teas that provide flavour without the added sugars or artificial additives found in soda.