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THE FIT FACTOR

FITNESS TIP

IF you want to enhance your energy levels, optimise your training performance, and promote faster results and recovery, choosing a diet that primarily consists of natural foods is the path you should look to follow

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ULTRA-PROCESSED foods can have the same effect as drugs, with people experiencing intense cravings, symptoms of withdrawal and continued consumption despite dangerous consequences, according to the latest research, which also suggests labelling ultra-processed foods as addictive might help some of us modify our behaviour.

Ultra-processed foods are made mostly from substances extracted from foods, such as fats, starches, added sugars, and hydrogenated fats. They may also contain additives such as artificial colours and flavours or stabilisers. Examples of these foods are frozen meals, soft drinks, hot dogs and cold cuts, fast food, packaged cookies, cakes, and salty snacks.

It's estimated one in seven adults and one in eight children could be hooked on ultra-processed food and people who consume foods that are high in fat and carbohydrates could meet the criteria for a diagnosis of substance use disorder.

Consequences of consuming these foods can include intense

cravings, symptoms of withdrawal, less control over intake and continued use despite consequences such as obesity, binge eating disorder, poorer physical and mental health, and lower quality of life.

A team of international researchers reviewed studies from 36 different countries and found ultra-processed food addiction is estimated to occur in 14% of adults and 12% of children. Understanding which foods are more addictive will allow them to give us better health warnings going forward.

The authors of the paper, published in *The British Medical Journal*, gave the example of a portion of salmon and a chocolate bar - the salmon has a carbohydrate to fat

ratio of roughly 0 to 1. But the chocolate bar has a carbohydrate to fat ratio of 1 to 1, which appears to increase a food's addictive potential.

Many ultra-processed foods have higher levels of both. That combination has a different effect on the brain similar to those seen with addictive substances such as nicotine and alcohol, therefore foods that deliver high levels of refined carbohydrates or added fats are a strong candidate for an addictive substance.

Research also showed the speed at which these foods deliver carbohydrates and fats to the gut could also play a role in their addictive potential.

Food additives may also contribute to the addictiveness of ultra-processed foods but are unlikely to be addictive on their own.

Of course, not all foods are addictive but processed foods high in refined carbohydrates and fats are clearly consumed in addictive patterns and are not good for you in the short term and over time can be extremely detrimental to your health and wellbeing.

A healthy outside starts from the inside

Motivational quote of the day



> The convenience might be tempting, but are the long-term impacts on your health worth it?