

# Detrimental effect of junk food

[Food & Diet](#), [Junk Food](#)



In modern day society, eating habits have completely changed from what they were in the past. More than one-third of U. S. adults are obese.

Regularly eating junk food can cause many negative repercussions including weight gain, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes. Even though junk food tastes good, it is not nutritionally balanced and can affect a person's health negatively primarily by excessive weight gain, illness, and health issues.

Andre F. Smith, author of Encyclopedia of Junk Food and Fast Food, defines junk food as, “ those commercial products, including candy, bakery goods, ice cream, salty snacks, and soft drinks, which have little or no nutritional value but do have plenty of calories, salt and fats.” People of all ages are shifting towards the junk food market because it makes an easier lifestyle for many people because it is hassle free. Elaine McGee, author of “ Are you a junk-food junkie?”, states that the main problem with junk food is its low satiation value which leads to overeating because the consumers do not feel as full when they eat these junk products.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation published a study in 2013 showing that children and adolescents take in more calories in fast food places and restaurants than they do in their own homes. Eating outside of their own home, children added a minimum of 210 calories per meal to their regular calorie intake. These additional calories, contribute to weight gain among children and adolescents. Being overweight is a risk factor for chronic health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and stroke. According to research conducted by the University of Cambridge, lab mice have also

shown degrading health when in the presence of short duration diets such as fast food.

Since 1970, the number of fast food outlets as well as the number of obese people in America have doubled (Obesity Action Coalition (OAC)). The cheap junk food will not outweigh the costs of medical fees associated with health problems caused by junk food and malnutrition in diets. In 2008, diabetes related medical costs were estimated at 69 billion dollars, while medical costs associated with obesity were approximately 147 billion dollars. These statistics suggest that medical costs associated with diabetes are extremely high.

The Public Health Nutrition Council published a study which discussed that fast food and commercial junk foods contribute to a higher risk of depression in adolescents. The data collected from this study showed that people who eat junk food “ 51 percent more likely to develop depression than those who eat little to no fast food.” A 2009 study determined that a junk food diet has the ability to degrade synapses in the brain as well as have a higher potential to become diagnosed with Alzheimers or dementia due to memory loss.

Body Mass Index, or BMI, is the calculation of a person ‘ s proportion of height to weight. In modern day society, the National Institutes of Health (NHI) calculates whether a person is at normal weight or over weight by calculating BMI rather than traditional height and weight charts. According to the National Institutes of Health, the definition of obesity is when a person obtains a BMI of 30 or higher and currently, one in three Americans is

considered obese. Many scientists have discovered that junk food not only adds inches to a person ' s waistline due to weight gain but also can lead to serious damage to the brain and body organs.

Additionally, excessive junk food intake tends to cause consumers to become impatient and have uncontrollable cravings that negatively affect their lifestyle routines. This is because junk food carries an excessive amount of refined carbohydrates and fats that can cause a person ' s blood sugar levels to rapidly fluctuate, causing fatigue and anxiety. Additionally, junk food is packed with high amounts of processed sugars and fats as well as artificial flavorings that can cause hyperactivity. These substances in junk food are what cause consumers to eat too much processed goods in order to satisfy their food cravings, even when they are not hungry.

Consumption of junk food and fast food over a long period of time has the ability to increase the risk of cancer, heart disease, liver disease, and kidney disease. Recently, The European Journal of Cancer Prevention reported that consuming a high content of saturated fats and artificial sweeteners increased a person ' s chance of being diagnosed with colorectal cancer and/or prostate cancer. Junk food has a direct correlation with increased triglyceride and bad cholesterol (LDL) levels. These work hand in hand, contributing to plaque formation in the arteries and heart disease.

Furthermore, in order to prevent a future increase in childhood obesity levels, the First Lady Michelle Obama created the “ Let ' s Move” Campaign in which children are advised to exercise and eat healthy. According to the Let ' s Move campaign, American citizens are “ eating 31 percent more

calories then [they] were 40 years ago.” Today, the average American eats approximately 15 more pounds of sugar and artificial sweeteners than he or she would have in 1970. In addition to this campaign, the U. S. Department of Agriculture put forth an implemented legislature of Dietary Guidelines for Americans in order to promote health among all Americans as well as prevent chronic illnesses.

According to a national study published in 2003, excessive junk food diets can hinder a child ‘ s academic performance in school. This study compared diets of 5, 000 children in public schools and compared their performance on standard academic literacy tests. The data showed that students who ate poor, low-quality foods, high in sugars in fats performed worse on these standardized tests. Additionally, junk food can skew academic performance of students in schools by altering memory and learning abilities.

There are many repercussions due to the consumption of junk food for people of all ages. Some may say that junk food is beneficial to consumers because some artificial ingredients that are incorporated in junk food is beneficial for health. For example, the blue food dye found on blue-colored M&Ms are considered helpful because they could reduce damage caused by spine injuries(National Academy of Sciences). However, many people do not realize that the chocolate inside M&Ms candy include approximately . 08 percent of cocoa. Therefore, the candy, itself, consists of high amounts of sugar and artificial flavors.

Moreover, some people argue that cheeses contain conjugated linoleic acid(CLA) which has anti-carcinogenic properties and is an antioxidant that is

beneficial to health( Times of India). As this may be true, many people do not realize that cheese is a product that, if taken in proper quantities based on a food pyramid, it is a healthy food. Cheese is not considered in the realms of junk food, and healthy cheeses contain dairy that is requirement for good health. According to a study, McDonald ' s mozzarella sticks contain 3. 76 percent of a starch filler and in other terms could be classified as a “ fake cheese.” This is an example in which McDonald ' s junk food has the opportunity to negatively impact a consumer ' s health.

In essence, the consumption of junk food can be detrimental to a person ' s health. The effects of junk food are negative in which it can cause excessive weight gain, illness, and immoderate health issues. Therefore, it is beneficial to have a healthy diet and follow a systematic approach by eating based on a food pyramid.