

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Wayne Terai

What's Lurking in Processed Foods

Did you know that processed foods aren't limited to items typically considered "junk" foods? Processed foods line grocery aisles masquerading as healthful, convenient fare. But just how nutritional is this ready-to-eat cuisine?

The truth is that most processed foods contain one or several chemical ingredients that are impossible to pronounce — ingredients that sound like they belong in paint, not food. Dr. Terai has gathered recent research about what is in processed food and its effect on the body.

Wonderful Whole Foods

Doctors of chiropractic, like Dr. Terai, teach patients that the foundation for health is rooted in preventive care. The *chiropractic lifestyle* is a mode of living that focuses on averting disease through making conscious, wellness-focused choices. This lifestyle encompasses chiropractic care, daily exercise, stress reduction and a diet consisting primarily of whole — not processed — foods.

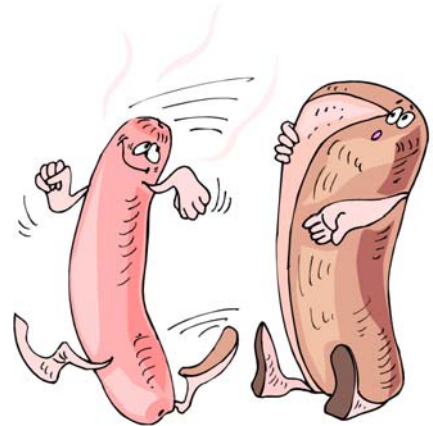
Not only are processed meals infused with chemicals, they're often lacking or devoid of nutritional fundamentals. Processed foods are linked to cancer, obesity and heart disease. They may also fall prey to contamination. For example, recently several manufactur-

ers recalled processed peanut butter snacks because of a potential salmonella outbreak.

Pesky Preservatives

Processed foods often contain preservatives. Some of these chemicals are linked with a bolstered risk of disease.

For instance, the common preservatives nitrates and nitrites are found in a variety of processed foods, including lunch meats, hot dogs and cured meats, such as ham, sausage and bacon. They're linked to asthma, nausea, vomiting and headaches. They are also linked to several forms of cancer (*Int J Cancer* 2006;15:119).

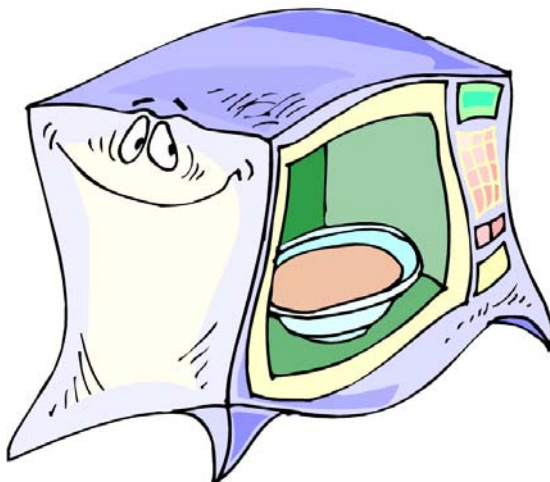


Now, a 16-year analysis documents that nitrites also increase the risk for lung diseases, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

The long-term study included 71,531 individuals who had never had lung disease or asthma. The participants, who ranged in age from 38 to 63, completed a dietary questionnaire rating cured meat consumption from never or almost never to four or more servings per week.

During 16 years of follow up, researchers found that the amount of cured meats consumed each week directly increased odds of lung disease among past or current smokers. They conclude, "Cured meat consumption was positively associated with COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) risk after adjustment for age, smoking, and multiple other potential confounders." (*Am J Clin Nutr* 2008;87:1002-8).

Other preservatives, such as sulfites (sulfur dioxide, metabisulfites), which prevent peeled fruits and vegetables from browning, are linked to allergic reactions. A general rule of thumb is: The longer the shelf life, the less healthy the food.



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False Flavorings

There are more than 2,000 “natural” and artificial food flavorings used in processed foods. Alarming, artificial flavors are not required to be listed in detail on food labels.

MSG (monosodium glutamate) is a well-known flavor enhancer that’s abundant in processed foods, such as canned soups, broths, chips, snacks and frozen dinners. Although the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires it to be listed in the ingredients, it is not always evident if a food contains MSG, as there are many hidden sources of the chemical. For instance, MSG lurks in other common ingredients, such as yeast extract, autolyzed yeast, calcium caseinate, sodium caseinate and hydrolyzed protein.

Research suggests a link between MSG and neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer’s disease, ALS, Parkinson’s disease, autism and fibromyalgia (*Brain Res Mol Brain Res* 2004;128:160-9). And according to an FDA-commissioned report, other side effects include nausea, headaches, dizziness, chest pains, drowsiness and mood swings.

Shameless Sweeteners

Processed meals, snacks and desserts are frequently stocked full of sugar, particularly in the form of high fructose corn syrup, which is linked with the rocketing obesity epidemic.

Other processed items contain artificial sweeteners, such as saccharine and aspartame. Artificial sweeteners are tied to headaches, insomnia, behavioral problems, hyperactivity and allergies.

Research suggests that aspartame may alter certain brain chemicals, affecting mental and emotional behavior. One recent study found that “headaches, insomnia and seizures are also some of the neurological effects that have been encountered, and these may be accredited to changes in regional brain concentrations of catecholamines, which include norepinephrine, epi-

nephrine and dopamine.”

The scientists conclude that “excessive aspartame ingestion might be involved in the pathogenesis of certain mental disorders and also in compromised learning and emotional functioning.” (*Eur J Clin Nutr* 2008;62:451-62.)

Thought-Provoking Thickeners, Emulsifiers and Stabilizers

Emulsifiers, stabilizers and thickeners alter the texture of foods, making foods more appealing in appearance and consistency. For example, propylene glycol is used as a food emulsifier, which prevents ingredients from separating into unappealing “globs.”

Although the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labeled propylene glycol as “generally recognized as safe,” it recently determined that it’s not safe in cat food. According to the FDA, research determined that propylene glycol “reduces the red blood cell survival time, renders red blood cells more susceptible to oxidative damage, and has other adverse effects in cats consuming the substance at levels found in soft-moist food.” Food science experts warn that the chemical may also prove to be harmful in humans.

Questionable Coloring

Coloring is added to countless processed edibles to enhance visual appeal. Manufacturers know that popcorn, for example, sells better when it maintains a bright yellow hue. Consumers don’t often question why processed foods seem so visually pleasing. However, dyes in processed foods are linked to allergies, asthma and hyperactivity. Scientists speculate that some of these chemicals may also be carcinogens.

Ruinous Refining

Processed baked goods generally contain refined, white flour. When flour is refined, the brown husk of the grain is stripped away, leaving the white, refined starch. Refined starches are absorbed immediately into the blood-

stream, amplifying the odds of developing obesity. Refining wheat also cleaves away most essential nutrients, such as riboflavin, magnesium, zinc, chromium, manganese and cobalt.

Many processed foods tout “whole grains” in bold letters on the front of the package. But, in reality, they contain only minuscule amounts of whole grains. Look for products with the words “100% whole grain” on the front of the package. Next, investigate the ingredient list: Whole wheat flour should be first on the list of ingredients and the *only* type of flour listed. Why all the fuss about whole grains? Whole grains retain the bran surrounding the starch, keeping essential vitamins and slowing the absorption into the bloodstream, dramatically slashing risks for obesity.

Bad Bleaching

In processed baked goods, the white flour is often bleached as the wheat is refined. Possible disease-causing bleaching agents include chlorine, chloride, nitrosyl, benzoyl peroxide and oxide of nitrogen.

Take Time for Health

Pouring hot water in instant soup or zapping a frozen dinner in the microwave makes meal preparation a snap. However, investing a bit more of your time to prepare whole foods will pay off exponentially in the form of disease prevention and increased vitality. This chiropractic office is committed to helping patients make wise dietary choices. Ask us for tips on incorporating whole foods into your busy life!

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