8 Foods to Avoid

Joey Shulman, DC

We often hear about the foods we should add to our diet: essential fats, organic vegetables, and whole grains. These nutritional superstars top the food charts. On the flip side, what we keep out of our diet is equally important to overall health and wellness.

1. Instant Rice

Instant white rice can cause dramatic fluctuations in blood sugar because its carbohydrates break down rapidly during digestion. Long-grain brown and basmati rice have a higher proportion of amylose (the inner portion of a starch granule) to amylopectin (the outer portion of a starch granule); therefore, these two rice varieties break down more slowly during digestion.

2. Pop and Sugary Juice

An average can of pop or sugary bottle of juice can contain anywhere from 7 to 12 teaspoons of added sugar. This sugar is a major contributor to weight gain and is also a factor in immune system suppression and dental decay. Instead of sugary drinks, buy 100 percent fruit juice or better yet, choose fresh fruit instead of fruit juices.
Continue to check product labels for hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils. These synthetic fats, commonly used in packaged baked goods, cookies, chips, and vegetable shortening, have been shown to contribute to the development of heart disease, high cholesterol, arteriosclerosis, and inflammatory conditions. It is smart to stay away from them.

4. SUGARY CEREALS

When choosing breakfast cereal, check the nutrition data label to ensure the carbohydrate-to-sugar ratio is no less than four to one. For example, if the total carbohydrate line reads 24 grams, the sugars line should have a value of 6 g or less. This means that most of the carbohydrates from the cereal are derived from grains and fibre, not from sugar.

5. HIGH-FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP

Food manufacturers love high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) because it is cheaper than other sources of sugar, extends shelf life, and is easily combined with other ingredients. Unfortunately, HFCS is often found in foods such as baked goods, sugary drinks, and frozen foods that are low in nutritive value and high in calories. To avoid HFCS, stick with food items that have been sweetened naturally with fruit juices or raw cane sugar.
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7. WHITE FLOUR

Refined flours such as those found in white bread and pasta have been milled and stripped of their precious nutritional value during the milling process. Whole grain breads and pastas and slow-cooking oatmeal offer wonderful, high-fibre alternatives. Both men and women should try to consume a minimum of 25 to 30 g of fibre each day.

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6. LUNCHEON MEATS
Most luncheon meats such as hot dogs and bologna contain nitrate preservatives, which are added to meat to help keep the pinkish red color. Unfortunately, nitrates combine with stomach juices to form nitrosamine, which has been found to cause cancer. As a healthier alternative, try substituting nitrate-free meats (ask your local butcher) or purchase soy meats that are low in saturated fat and nitrate-free.

8. FOOD COLOURING
Food colouring contains no nutrient value and can create various symptoms in the body, such as allergies and behavioural problems. Tartrazine (also called FD&C Yellow No. 5) is one of the most problematic food colourants and has been linked to asthma, allergies, hives, and thyroid tumours. Watch for this synthetic yellow dye in convenience foods, but also in lemon and honey products, particularly cold remedies.

For a healthy diet that focuses on prevention, keep these eight food offenders out of your diet and focus on fresh, whole food choices instead.

Joey Skulman, DC, is a chiropractor, registered nutritionist, and author of The Last 15: A Weight Loss Breakthrough (Wiley, 2008). For more information, please visit drjoey.com.

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