

Impact of fast food on health

AMMATUL FATIMA*¹ AND SANGITA SRIVASTAVA²

¹Senior Research Fellow and ¹Professor & Head

Department of Home Science, University of Allahabad, Allahabad (U.P.) India

ABSTRACT

“Eat healthy and live healthy” is one of the essential requirements for long life unfortunately today’s world has been adapted to a system of consumption of foods which has several adverse effects on health. Lifestyle changes has compelled us so much that one has so little time to really think what we are eating is right! Globalization and urbanization have greatly affected ones eating habits and forced many people to consume fancy and high calorie fast food. Research into the possible health hazards on consumption of such high calorie foods has given an insight to avoid them, but unfortunately measures taken are not as effective as they need to be, various diseases like coronary artery disease and diabetes mellitus have seen a profound rise in developing countries and such unhealthy junk food consumption is one of the notable factors to its contribution. This global problem of consuming junk food on a large scale and its impact on health needs emphasis and health education which can greatly contribute to its limited consumption and switching over to healthy eating habits for better living. Junk food and its impact on health have been reviewed from various resources and have been systematically presented, so as to emphasize its ill effects and measures to be adapted towards healthy living.

Key Words : Health, Disease, Obesity, Junk food

INTRODUCTION

Diet and nutrition are important factors in the promotion and maintenance of good health. Health and nutritional status of an individual depends on the food they. Food habits are an important part of our diet which affects the amount and type of food consumed and thus the nutritional status of the individual. The diets of the girls were mainly based on cereals and deficient in vegetables and fruits. The low intake of these protective foods resulted in nutritional disorders. Health and nutrition are the most important contributory factors of human index measure in any country. India is passing through the phase of economic transition while the problem of obesity continues to be a major problem.

A disease is a particular abnormal condition that affects part or all organisms and that consists of a disorder of a structure or function. The study of disease is called pathology, which includes the study of cause. Disease is often construed as a medical condition associated

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with specific sign and symptoms.

Obesity is a medical condition in which excess body fat has accumulated to the extent that it may have a negative effect on health. People are generally considered obese when their Body Mass Index (BMI), a measurement obtained by dividing a person's weight by the square of the person's height, is over 30 kg/m² with the range 25–30 kg/ m² defined as overweight. Obesity accounts for 300,000 deaths in the U.S alone. Research into junk food and fast food restaurants have found that there is a direct relationship between the number of fast food restaurants within the local area and obesity rate.

Junk foods have empty calories as the energetic content is not complemented with proteins [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protein_\(nutrient\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protein_(nutrient)) and lipids required for nutritious alimentation. Foods commonly considered junk foods include salted snacks, gum, candy, sweet desserts, fried fast foods, and sugary carbonated beverages. Many foods such as burgers, pizza can be considered either healthy or junk food depending on their ingredients and preparation methods.

The more highly processed food items usually fall under the junk food category, including breakfast cereals that are mostly sugar or high fructose corn syrup and white flour or milled corn. The availability of junk food and snacks at low prices and marketing strategies adapted by manufacturers of such foods has triggered an evolution wherein, consumption of foods that require neither the structure nor the preparation of a formal meal.

Through health education a change towards good eating practices and adaptation of healthy living is possible. India is no exception to this changing fast food trend. India's fast food industry is growing by 40 per cent a year. Statistics plays India in 10th place in fast food per capita spending figures with 2.1 per cent of expenditure of annual total spending.

According to the national sample survey organization (NSSO) survey in the year 2005 released by the Delhi government, people living in Delhi spend Rs. 371, on an average on processed food and beverages per month. The total value of junk food consumed in India in 2003 was about Rs. 41,000 crore, of which rural area accounted for a little over Rs. 22,000 crore, as published in an article in newspaper by Sudhanshu Ranade in Business line on July 13th 2005. 'Nature' in 2007 states that preventable diseases caused mainly due to smoking, poor diet as junk food consumption and lack of exercise could kill millions in developing world in next 10 years.

What is a junk food :

An empty calorie food is a high calorie or calorie rich food which lacks in micronutrients such as vitamins and minerals or amino acids and fiber but has high energy (calories). These foods do not contain the nutrients that our body needs to stay healthy. Hence these that has poor nutritional value is considered unhealthy and may be called as junk food. What makes these foods to be called as 'junk' is that it contains high levels of refined sugar, white flour, trans fat and unsaturated fat, salt and numerous food additives such as monosodium glutamate and tartrazine at the same time it is lacking in protein, vitamins, essential minerals, fiber among other healthy attributes.

A food that is high in fat, sodium, and/or sugar and provides high calories yet useless in value is generally known as junk food. Junk food is easy to carry, purchase and consume.

Generally a junk food is a very attractive appearance by adding food additives and colours to enhance flavor, texture and for increasing

Appealing nature of junk food :

Junk food comprises of anything that is quick, tasty, convenient and fashionable. Clever junk food advertising and the lure of convenience in addition to taste drag people to junk food addiction. Following factors makes it appealing:

Time factor:

Junk food addiction is so high because of its simplicity. They are easy to prepare and ready to consume within no time.

Taste factor:

Great taste also, is another important reason to an extent that influences to opt for junk. This taste is achieved owing to lavish usage oils salts and/or sugar.

Attractiveness:

Packing of such foods has very attractive appearance by adding food additives and colours in addition to enhancement in flavor.

Ad factor:

Advertising has a major role in attracting the public, particularly children and adolescents to the junk food selling joints.

Health impact of junk foods :

Digestive and cardiovascular systems :

Many fast foods and drinks are loaded with carbohydrates and, consequently, a lot of calories. Our digestive system breaks carbs down into sugar (glucose), which it then releases into our blood stream. Our pancreas responds by releasing insulin, which is needed to transport sugar to cells throughout our body. As the sugar is absorbed, our blood sugar levels drop. When blood sugar gets low, our pancreas releases another hormone called glucagon. Glucagon tells the liver to start making use of stored sugars, when everything is working in sync, blood sugar levels stay within a normal range. When we take in high amounts of carbs, it causes a spike in our blood sugar. That can alter the normal insulin response. Frequent spikes in blood sugar may be a contributing factor in insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.

Added sugars have no nutritional value but are high in calories. According to the American Heart Association (AHA) most Americans take in twice as many sugars as is recommended for optimal health. All those extra calories add up to extra weight, a contributing factor in heart disease.

Trans fats, often found in fast food, are known to raise LDL cholesterol levels. That's the undesirable kind of cholesterol. It can also lower HDL cholesterol. That's the good cholesterol. Trans fats may also increase our risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Too much sodium helps to retain water, so it can cause general bloating and puffiness.

Sodium can contribute to high blood pressure or enlarged heart muscle. If we have congestive heart failure, cirrhosis, or kidney disease, too much salt can contribute to a dangerous build-up of fluid. According to the American Heart Association, children who have a high-sodium diet are at twice the risk for developing high blood pressure than children on a low-sodium diet. Excess sodium may also increase risk for kidney stones, kidney disease, and stomach cancer. High cholesterol and high blood pressure are among the top risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

Respiratory system :

Obesity is associated with an increase in respiratory problems, and treating those ailments may be more complicated. Even without diagnosed medical conditions, obesity may cause episodes of shortness of breath or wheezing with little exertion. Obesity may play a role in the development of sleep apnea and asthma.

A recent study published in the journal “Thorax” suggests that children who eat fast food at least three times a week are at increased risk of asthma and rhinitis (congested, drippy nose).

Central nervous system :

There are many types of headache and many things that can cause them. Some dietary triggers that can be found in fast food include salt, processed meats, nitrates, and MSG.

A study published in the journal Public Health Nutrition showed that eating commercial baked goods (doughnuts, croissants, cake) and fast food (pizza, hamburgers, hot dogs) may be linked to depression. People who eat fast food are 51 per cent more likely to develop depression than those who eat little to no fast food. It was also found that the more fast food they consumed, the more likely study participants were to develop depression.

Skin and bones :

Chocolate and greasy foods, often blamed for acne, are not the real culprits. It's carbs. According to the Mayo Clinic, because foods that are high in carbohydrates increase blood sugar levels, they may also trigger acne. The Thorax study showed a higher risk of eczema (inflamed, irritated patches of skin) among children with a diet high in fast food.

When we consume foods high in carbs and sugar, bacteria residing in our mouth produce acids. Those acids are hard on our teeth. In fact, they can destroy tooth enamel, a contributing factor in dental cavities. When the enamel of our tooth is lost, it can't be replaced. Poor oral health has also been linked to other health problems.

Avoiding junk foods :

Awareness on junk food facts is lacking amongst every individual in the community. Eating a healthy diet is a hard work. The only way to avoid junk food is to encourage eating healthy snacks and more of the following foods, which are usually considered to be a part of a healthy diet.

- Food those are low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol.
- High fiber foods, including whole grain foods, vegetables and fruits.

- Foods that have only a moderate amount of sugar and salt.
- Calcium rich foods, to meet daily calcium requirements.
- Iron rich foods, to meet daily requirement of iron.

Measures to be taken especially for children :

- Since junk food and children have a strange affinity to each other, try and avoid children to get habituated to such foods.
- Controlling children from eating junk foods in school is another step that helps in a long term. School administration along with the parents has a combined responsibility to educate children about avoiding junk food in school premises.
- Developing awareness for fitness will certainly separate junk food and good life. As quoted in an article “Wanted child lock for junk food” in ‘The Telegraph’ published on 16th February 2009, Calcutta edition by Varuna Verma “But the educating parents about the harmful effects of junk food could also help children to kick the habit”

Conclusion :

Junk foods have certainly carved up the ‘Third World’ due to globalization. It is an integral part of life in the developed and also the developing world, and coming with it is a massive increase in obesity and associated problems. The key to eating these junk foods is moderation, occasional consumption and preferably in small portions. It is not impossible to win war with junk foods against healthy foods against healthy foods. However, one must beware entice is so strong that we will be addicted. It must be remembered that the addiction to junk is great for business. It is all in our hands to choose junk food or health.

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