

## JUNK FOOD VERSUS HEALTHY FOOD

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**Abstract:** *This paper is a brief study on issues relating to junk food and healthy food. Healthy diet consists in consuming nutritionally balanced foods. Unhealthy diet includes many high processed foods which are rich in calories but low in nutrients. Consuming of junk food is responsible along with other factors such as pollution, stress for increasing of disease risk and obesity. Healthy diet contributes to minimizing the risk of illness. Junk foods contain refined sugar, saturated fats, salt, artificial sweeteners and additives which are unhealthy for human body. Healthy foods are rich in mineral substances, vitamins, antioxidants, fibers, proteins with high biological value, omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids which are important for human health. The main reasons for which junk food are sometimes preferred is that they are often cheaper than healthy foods and are sold as ready to eat or as convenience foods that need a little time for cooking or preparing them.*

**Key words:** *junk foods, healthy foods, nutrients, calories, disease risk.*

### INTRODUCTION

The correct nutritional diet named and balanced diet is an absolutely necessary condition for proper development and growth of human body [12]. The necessity and the benefits of healthy food and meals for human have been concerned the scientists and sociologists for more than ten years ago. They have defined three different general concepts of health referring to the way in which the food could be assessed as being safe: "Health as nutritional value"; "Health as pleasure" and "Health as purity" [6]. A healthy diet is considered that which is composed of many fruits, vegetables, whole grains and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats, meat, fish and dairy. Besides health benefits, good foods help people to maintain their weight within optimal limits [26]. A balanced diet together with doing sport could help also the people to keep their weight and cholesterol level and prevent the development of type 2 diabetes and many other diseases [25]. Healthy foods are rich in macronutrients as proteins with high biological value, essential fatty acids as omega 3 and omega 6, unsaturated fats, minerals (Ca, Mg, Se, Fe, Zn) and vitamins (A, B, C, D, E) [26]. It is well known that the many valuable nutrients, such as vitamins and antioxidants from fresh food are destroyed during heating. From this point of view, a healthy diet includes unprocessed meal representing fresh fruits and vegetables and raw unsaturated fats, represented by vegetable oils. Junk food named and fast food have recorded an increasing dynamics since 1970s. Fast food is mostly consumed by adolescents, who are used to eat junk food on average twice a week [20]. Junk food are considered foods high in calories provided mainly by sugar and fat and poor in valuable nutrients as protein, vitamins or minerals. The meals with a high level of protein consisting in large quantities of meat cooked with too much saturated fat, as hamburger or fried chicken is also assimilated junk food [23]. The most known junk foods are snack foods, sweets, gum, fried fast food and sugary carbonated beverages. There are foods such as pizza or taco, which are classified as both junk food and healthy food depending on their composition and applied cooking method [23]. The scientific studies shown that fast foods are responsible for different disorders and diseases like obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular and coronary diseases [20].

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In order to realize this work it has been studied 26 scientific paper and a brief and concise summary was made of them in term of positive and negative aspects of junk and healty foods.

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

Some definitions of junk foods and healthy foods are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**The definitions of junk foods and healthy foods**

No.	Definitions of junk foods	Definitions of healthy foods
1.	Junk food, knowed also as fast food shows food which is quickly processed and served at fast food restaurants. [20]	A healthy diet is considered the one which is represented by many fruits, vegetables, whole grains and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats, meat, fish and dairy. [26]
2.	Junk food is prepared at industrial level using standard raw material and are ultraprocessed. [20]	Healthy foods are nutritional balanced having a high level of essential macronutrients and micronutrients [5, 6, 17], sensory pleasant [9, 21], without artificial additives [10, 8].
3.	Junk foods are defined as foods which have a higher energy density and lower nutritional quality [15, 18]	

In Tabel 2 are shown some of the popular exemple of junk foods and healthy foods.

**Table 2**

**Exemple of junk foods and healthy foods**

No.	Exemple of junk foods	Exemple of healthy foods
1.	Snack foods, sweets, gum, fried fast food and sugary carbonated beverages are the most known junk foods. [23]	Fruits and vegetables consumed raw or minimally prepared, beans, lean meat and fish eaten minimally processed are considered as samples of healthy eating because of they are rich in nutrients and they have low energy density. [11]
2.	The meals with a high level of protein consisting in large quantities of meat cooked with too much saturated fat, as hamburger and fried chicken or similary food. [23].	

As it is shown in Table 2, fruits and vegetables, lean meat and fish are considered healthy foods it they are consumed minimally processed or even raw in case of fruits and vegetables in order to preserve their nutrients. It is well known that the temperature and the time exposure to heating lead to the vitamins and antioxidants degradation. Foods which are sold in fast food are considered junk food.

The nutrients which can be found in junk foods and healthy foods are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

**Nutrients from junk foods and healthy foods**

No.	Nutrients from junk foods	Nutrients from healthy foods
1.	Fat, sugar and salt in high quantities; Fiber in a small proportion; High energy value [14].	Potassium, dietary fiber, folate (folic acid), vitamin A, and vitamin C [26].
2.	Fast food are considered foods with a higher energy density and lower nutritional properties than the same foods that are prepared at home. [15, 18]	High proportion of macronutrients as proteins with great biological value, essential fatty acids as omega 3 and omega 6, unsaturated fats, minerals (Ca, Mg, Se, Fe, Zn) and vitamins (A, B, C, D, E) [26].
3.	Low or lack vitamins, minerals, fibre and amino acids content [26].	

The junk food are characterized by a great energy value, but are poor in valuable nutrients, while healthy food are rich in macro and micronutrients.

The way in which the diet influences the human body are shown in Table 4

**Table 4**

**The influence of diet on human body**

No.	The influence of junk foods on human body	The influence of healthy food on human body
1.	Consuming junk food has been associated with increasing of risk obesity and insulin resistance. [13, 16,19].	A diet including vegetables and fruits could reduce risk for heart disease. [25]
	Obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular and coronary diseases are many times determined by a fast foods diet. [20].	
2.	Junk foods contain colorants which are often inedible, carcinogenic and bad to the body [17].	Consuming of vegetables and fruits, which are rich in potassium could decrease of blood pressure and may reduce the risk of developing kidney stones and help to decrease bone loss [25].
3.	Eating fast food has been associated with poor dietary habits, such as higher intakes of energy, fat, sodium, added sugars and sugar-sweetened beverages, and lower intakes of fruit, vegetables, fibre and milk. [5 ,19].	Diets including foods that contain fiber could be responsible for decreasing the risk of heart disease, obesity and type 2 diabetes [25]
4.	This fast food attack the digestive system and its effects can occur after several years. [1]	A diet rich in some vegetables and fruits could defend the human body against some types of cancers [24]

The advantages and disadvantages of junk foods are describe in Table 5.

**Table 5**

**The advantages and disadvantages of junk foods**

No.	The advantages of junk food	The disadvantages of junk foods
1.	Junk food is often cheaper than other food products that are sold in the market. [22]	Junk Food can determine the weight increasing that would have the effect on obesity developing
2.	Junk food can be consumed in a very short time saving time for meal preparing.	High amount of fat from fast food could cause health issue.
3.	Fast foods are easy to procure and it is possible to be eaten anywhere [3].	High sugar content of junk food as icecreams, sweets, dairy products increase the risk of diabet developing.
4.	Junk Food can be bought at any time of the day.	Because junk foods are salty may determin may result in the occurrence of cardiovascular and kidney disease.
5.	Fast Food are able to satisfy easily our appetites.	There are some fast foods which contain additives, preservatives and bad fat.

The advantages and disadvantages of healthy foods are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6**

**The advantages and disadvantages of healthy foods**

No.	The advantages of healthy food	The disadvantages of healthy foods
1.	A diet rich in raw fruits and vegetables can decrease the risk for heart and cardiovascular disease. [25]	Healthy foods cost often more then other foods and and you can not find them in all stores. [2]
2.	A balanced diet, low in saturated fat and high in fibre, associated with weight mantaining can reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.	Fruits and vegetables are seasonal.
3.	A healthy diet consisting in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats, meat and dairy can prevent you from gaining weigh.	

**CONCLUSIONS**

Junk food, knowed also as fast food are food which is quickly and ultraprocessed in an industrial fashion using standard raw material. Junk food are considered unhealthy, they are rich in calories and low in nutrients. Junk food are cheaper than other food, are easily obtained and can be consumed everywhere. Junk food could contain substances which are bad for human body and and may induce some diseases.

Healthy food are considered fruits, vegetables, whole grain, lean meat and fish. Helathy food are rich in valuable macro and micronutrients as proteins with high biological value, omega 3 and omega 6 faty acids, vitamins, fiber and antioxidants. Healthy food help human body to maintain an optimal weight, and reduce the risk of many diseases.

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