



The weight of processed foods

Background Information (optional):

- [Processed Foods and Health | The Nutrition Source](#)
- [How 260 Tons of Thanksgiving Leftovers Gave Birth to an Industry](#)
- [What is ultra-processed food?](#)
- [The Ultimate Guide to Pantry Milks and How to Use Them](#)
- [How to Choose Frozen Dinners](#)
- [Canned foods nutritionists swear by](#)

Behavior Goals

1. Understand the association between increased health risk and ultra-processed foods.
2. Define and find examples of ultra-processed foods.
3. Understand how to stock a pantry with healthy shelf stable foods.

Meeting Preparation:

1. Review the newsletter. Send questions or concerns to your coordinator.
2. Review the background resources (website links are provided above).
3. Choose one of the recipe options. Make the recipe at least once before the meeting. Write down helpful hints for the group. If virtual, have ideas on what to share about the recipe you tried.
4. Determine how to transport and taste featured food tasting.
5. If the meeting is virtual, prepare ideas for how to engage participants in the recipe making process.
 - a. Prepare a grocery list for the recipe chosen that can be sent with newsletter for participants to purchase
 - b. Demonstrate recipe on video and direct participants to the recipe in the newsletter.
 - c. If conference call: create a conversation about the recipe: serving size, freezing instructions, tips, discussion on ingredients, nutrition etc.

Continued on page 2

The suggested wording for the presentation is in regular font and the facilitator directions are in ***bold, dark red italic.***

It's best not to read the presentation, but to use your own words, staying close to the meaning.

Props:

1. Optional: PowerPoint or (“Whiteboard”) to display branding game
2. Display of 1 example of a food in different processed forms (i.e. fresh tomato, tomato sauce, pizza box)
3. Scratch paper and pen for participants (If virtual, explain at the beginning that participants will need something to write with and paper).

Conversation

Last time, we spoke about saturated and unsaturated fats. Which one of these does research recommend we eat more of? Research tells us to shift food choices from those high in saturated fats to those high in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats.

What are some examples of each?

Allow participants time to answer.

Examples:

- **Saturated Fat**
- **Whole milk dairy products**
- **Butter**
- **Cocoa butter**
- **Fatty cuts of meat**
- **Poultry skin**
- **Bacon**
- **Sausage**
- **Palm oil**
- **Coconut oil**

Unsaturated Fat

- **Plant-based oils such as safflower, sunflower, corn, soybean, peanut, canola and olive**
- **Nuts**
- **Seeds**
- **Avocados**
- **Fatty fish**

Introduction

This is the first of three newsletters on processed foods. Today we are going to learn about what it means for a food to be processed and discuss healthy shelf stable foods.

Let’s play a fun game to start. I am going to say some slogans with some options for you to guess which company it was used for.

Idea to write slogans and options on board so participants can physically see them. Correct answers are bolded below. Have participants hold up a 1 or 2 to guess.

Slogan- "Nothing Says Lovin' Like Something from the Oven"

Options: **Pillsbury**, Betty Crocker

Slogan- "So crisp, they crackle in cream"

Options: Cap'n Crunch, **Kellogg's Rice Krispies**

Slogan - "Mmm, Mmm, Good."

Options: **Campbell's**, Progressive

Slogan: "Hey Mikey...he likes it."

Options: **Life**, Cheerios

Slogan: "When it rains, it pours."

Options: Pepperidge Farms, **Morton Salt**

Slogan: "They're magically delicious."

Options: **Lucky Charms**, Kraft Jet Puffed Marshmallows

Optional: Fill in the blank: There's always room for _____. (**Jell-O**, Quaker Oats)

_____ is for kids. (Trix, Chef Boy-Ar-Dee, Gerber).

What was the San Francisco Treat? (Van-Camps, **Rice a Roni**)

- Ask any mermaid you happen to see, what's the best tuna? _____ (**Chicken of the Sea**, Swanson)

Think back to the 1950s and 1960s when processed foods were gaining popularity. What are some household brands you remember (specifically food brands)? Do you have any fond memories of a particular product or brand?

Allow participants time to answer. Idea: Round Robin of each participant naming a household brand from these years.

Ideas to jog memories: Chef Boyardee, Egg-O, Kix, Cheez Whiz, Tang, Sweet-n-Low, Swanson TV Dinners, Diet Rite, Green Giant, Pringles, Gatorade, Max-well Coffee, Peter Pan, Fig Newtons, Ore Ida Potatoes.

Nutrition Discussion

Most of these processed foods are a part of our lives now. We see and use these foods daily, but on the other hand we are also told processed foods are harmful for our health. So what are we to believe? It is important to understand what it really means for a food to be processed.

Let's go over the categories of processing. We can refer to the newsletter on page 2 for these categories.

Invite the group to look at the chart on page 2 with the categories.

The first category is unprocessed or minimally processed. The example listed is a tomato - this would be a food in its natural form, without any processing. To cut up the tomato would be considered minimally processed, but we are still benefiting from all of the vitamins and minerals in the original tomato, without any added sugars or sodium.

Ask the group to think of some other foods that would be in this category.

The next category is processed. In the example, a tomato then goes through a process to turn it into tomato sauce.

Reference the tomato sauce jar. Read some of the ingredients (other than tomatoes)

Virtual option: have the tomato sauce label on the slide.

While the tomatoes are still present in this jar, other things were added to enhance the product. We are still able to get some health benefits from the tomato sauce. But because the original fresh tomato was altered and sugar/sodium were added, the nutrition has now changed. It's important for us to remember that processed foods such as tomato sauce have a place in our diet, but we should also realize that increased calories, sodium, and sugars come along with them.

Ask the group to think of some other foods that would be in this category.

The last category is ultra-processed. These are the foods that research has shown to have the greatest health risk for us with increased consumption. The example in the newsletter would be a frozen pizza. The pizza has undergone even more processing to turn it into the product we buy at the grocery store and consume.

Again, you can reference the pizza box and read the ingredients to show all of the things added to it. Ask the group to think of some other foods that would be in this category.

Challenge - think of another food that you may have available in your kitchen that you can find all 3 different forms of.

Give participants time to think and write down on a piece of scratch paper. You can either have participants read out loud and collect all of them and read responses to the group anonymously.

(Hint - hard boiled eggs are a great source of protein but what about that cookie dough?)

Examples:

Egg: Hard boiled egg, Egg Beaters, Frozen Egg-Wich Sandwich

Oats: Rolled Oats, Apple Cinnamon Oatmeal, Chocolate Covered Granola Bar

Spinach: Fresh Spinach Leaves, Canned Spinach, Spinach and Artichoke Dip

Physical Activity:

When you think of enjoyable physical activity what comes to mind?

Let the group give examples of this.

Examples:

A favorite walking route.

Riding their bike because it gives them so much freedom.

Playing pickleball with their friends - competition and friendship!

Using a nearby trail where they can see nature.

Using a treadmill or stationary bike so they can watch television at the same time.

Let's pick 2 barriers to making physical activity enjoyable and brainstorm some solutions.

After selecting a barrier to brainstorm, have participants call out potential solutions. Try to get at least five solutions, there are examples below that can be used if needed. Ask the participant who suggested the barrier, if they might be willing to try any of the proposed solutions. Repeat the brainstorm with another barrier.

Examples:

Barrier: Weather

- Develop a set of regular activities that are always available regardless of weather (indoor cycling, aerobic dance, indoor swimming, calisthenics, stair climbing, mall walking, dancing, gymnasium games, etc.)
- Check the forecast at the beginning of the week and identify the three best weather days and plan on being active those days.
- Identify the time of day that works best. (If it's hot, exercise in the morning. If it's raining in the morning, exercise in the afternoon. If it's cold, exercise when the sun is shining bright!)
- Find an activity that you enjoy. People who do exercise they enjoy are less likely to cite weather as a barrier to exercise.

Barrier: Time

- Monitor your activities for one week and identify at least three, 30-minute slots you could use for physical activity.
- Break it up: take a 10-minute activity break at scheduled times of the day.
- Wear comfortable shoes that encourage movement so you can sneak in physical activity.
- Add physical activity to your daily routine. For example, walk or ride your bike to run errands or go shopping, walk the dog, park farther away from your destination, etc.
- Exercise while you watch TV. This can be with a piece of equipment or taking a walk around the house or the block during commercial breaks. You can also stretch or lift light weights during the break too.

Barrier: Joint pain

- Alternate the kind of exercise you do, to put stress on different parts of the body.
- Try swimming or other water exercise. The buoyancy of the water allows your body to move without the pressure on your joints.
- Try taking a hot shower or bath after exercise to reduce stiffness and soreness.

Barrier: Boring

- Look for programming in your community (the Y, parks and recreation, adult education classes, community colleges).
- Invite friends and family members to exercise with you. You can also catch up with friends and family on the phone while you walk.
- Determine what time of day you feel most inspired and try to fit activity into that time frame (maybe it's not boredom, it's a lack of energy).

Tasting Activities:

1. Energy Bites (preferred):

- <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe/energy-bites/>
- If participants are concerned about calories, be sure to encourage moderation and portion control with these as they are higher in calories.
- The recipe states to roll into 24 balls. This would compare to the size of a ping pong ball.
- These can be frozen up to 3 months for a longer shelf life.
- Alternative recipe using beans - <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe/peanut-butter-balls/>
- You can switch out chia seeds for flax seeds. You could also use shelled sunflower seeds as a substitution. Recommendation to choose milled/ground flax seeds to get higher nutritional benefit.
- Health benefits of flax and chia seeds:
 - Rich in fiber (good for gut health, help lower cholesterol)
 - Omega 3 Fatty Acids (brain health, lowers risk of heart disease, lowers risk of stroke)
 - Good source of protein
 - Good source of antioxidants (reduces risk of cancer)

2. Sweet Potato Fries

- <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe/sweet-potato-fries/>
- Instead of buying processed foods, sometimes there are simple things you can make at home!
- Sweet potatoes are a great source of vitamin A, great for our eye sight!
- Keep the skin on for added fiber. Cut into rings or wedges depending on how much skin you want in each bite. Make sure you thoroughly wash beforehand!
- You can season these anyway you'd like! Try garlic and onion powder for a savory taste without the salt!
- Helpful video to watch: https://spendsmart.wpengine.com/video/make-homemade-oven-fries/#video_player

Take Action

In the “Eat Healthy. Take Action!” section, note ways that you can benefit your health by making healthier choices. Some ideas to offer:

- Eating 1 more vegetable or fruit serving each day.
- Drink 1 more glass of water each day.
- Eat 1-2 servings of seafood each week.
- Drink 1 less soda or juice each day.
- Eat a protein source at breakfast each day.
- Eat out 1 less time each week.
- I will use 1 item from my pantry each day.

Ask for two volunteers who are willing to share one action step. Help them think about details that will help them be successful (what, when, where, how often, how much, etc.)

Stock a Healthy Pantry (page 3 of newsletter)

This is a chance for additional take action steps at home. Ask participants to utilize the healthy pantry list in their own home.

Take action at home! After our meeting, go through your pantry/kitchen and write a list of healthy foods that are needed to ensure preparedness for emergencies. Be sure to go through expiration dates and throw away any foods that are expired.

Ask participants if they have any other foods not on this list that are pantry staples in their homes.