

Another knock on processed food? New study suggests excessive amounts could feed cognitive decline

Eating highly processed foods like instant noodles, sugary drinks or frozen meals may be linked to a faster rate of cognitive decline.

That's according to new research presented [August 1] at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in San Diego. The study examined the diets and cognition of more than 10,000 middle-aged and older adults in Brazil.

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The category of food in question includes items like white bread, crackers, cookies, fried snacks, cream cheese, ice cream, candy, soda, hot dogs and other processed meats. These ultra-processed foods make up about 58% of all calories consumed in the U.S., according to a [2016 study](#). The authors of the new study estimated that in Brazil, that share is closer to 25% or 30%.

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[Researcher Clausia] Suemoto emphasized that her study didn't attempt to examine the underlying reasons for cognitive decline, and it does not conclude that consumption of ultra-processed food is a direct cause. Rather, it found a correlation between the two.

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Lower socioeconomic status can often mean less access to health care, less time for exercise and more exposure to environmental pollution, all of which also influence physical and cognitive health.

But plenty of other research has highlighted the health consequences of processed food consumption, including an elevated risk of [cancer](#), [diabetes](#) and [heart disease](#).

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