

What makes ‘ultra-processed food’ so unhealthy?

A recent analysis by the [Access to Nutrition Initiative](#) finds about 70% of food products sold in the U.S. are unhealthy — and much of the food can be [classified as ultra-processed](#).

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other ‘disruptive’ innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

[SIGN UP](#)

[Dr. Chris van Tulleken](#), the author of *Ultra-Processed People*, made himself a test subject for a brief, one-month experiment.

Van Tulleken, an infectious disease physician in his mid-40s, swapped his normal, healthy diet full of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains for foods that mostly came from packages, boxes and bottles.

...

[Chris van Tulleken]: I think a lot of this food has been engineered to drive excess consumption. This food is energy dense. It’s full of fat, salt and sugar. So you can consume calories at a much higher rate than when you’re eating whole foods. Also, ultra-processed food is often processed into much smaller particles. So it may be being absorbed in a different part of the gut than the part that releases the fullness signal. So I suspect you’re eating this food faster than your body’s ability to send a signal to the brain saying, “I’m done now.”

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)