

## The dark side of convenient foods: 32 health problems from heart disease to depression are associated with ultra-processed foods, new study claims

Many studies have indicated that ultra-processed foods are uniquely bad for our health. But the authors of this latest research, [published](#) [February 28] in the BMJ, say there hasn't yet been a comprehensive, bird's-eye view of the scientific literature surrounding these foods. To remedy that, they decided to conduct an "umbrella review"—a review of other reviews and meta-analyses on a particular topic.

All told, the team looked at data from 14 reviews that collectively involved nearly 10 million people, none of which were funded by manufacturers of ultra-processed foods. Across the board, they found that a higher exposure to these foods was associated with a higher risk of 32 health outcomes, from heart disease to trouble sleeping to depression. Greater intake of ultra-processed foods was also tied to a greater risk of dying from any cause (21% higher), as well as a greater risk of heart-related death specifically (66% higher).

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It can be very difficult to tease out just how unhealthy any one group of foods can be, and the authors note that the evidence for some of these links is much stronger than others. With conditions like Crohn's disease, obesity, and colon cancer, for instance, the authors found weak to no evidence for a potential association. Conversely, the strongest evidence for a higher risk was seen with heart-related deaths, common mental health disorders, and type 2 diabetes.

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