



Beware Before Indulging Taste Buds with Junk Food

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According to the NGO, many brands claim that they contain zero trans-fats even though tests showed that they have heavy doses of it. The report said that most popular "junk foods contain very high levels of trans-fats, salts and sugar - which inevitably lead to severe ill health and diseases like obesity and diabetes." The report revealed the names of 16 major food brands that included the list of big names like Maggi, MacDonald's foods, Top Ramen noodles, Haldiram's Aloo Bhujia and KFC's fried chicken. The tests were carried out on potato chips, aloo bhujia, soft drinks, noodles, burgers, fried chicken and French fries showed that just one serving of these will "completely overturned one's daily diet chart." According to the CSE report, the manufacturers of these products kept their consumers in dark over the real contents in the products.



"The NIN benchmark for maximum salt for one person is 6 gram, while the WHO puts it at 5 gram. The normal 80-gram packet of Maggi noodles that many of us gobble up almost on a daily basis has over 3.5 gram of salt - enough to take care of over 60 per cent of our daily salt intake," said the CSE giving an example. The World Health Organization (WHO) and National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) prescribe how much sugar, salt, carbohydrates and fats each individual can ideally have everyday to stay healthy. The CSE also said that the real threat was from the trans-fats disclosed by the companies. According to the WHO, in a balanced diet, 1 percent should come from the trans fats. Thus an adult female can have 2.1 gram of trans fats per day, while a male can have 2.6 gram and a child aged between 10-12 years can have 2.3 gram. The CSE found that Haldi Ram, which claims to have no trans-fats contains 2.5 gram per 100 gram. Top Ramen

Super Noodles (Masala) contains 0.7 gram of it per 100 gram. PepsiCo's Lays (Snack Smart) which claimed through its advertisements that the chips are healthy because they have zero trans fats, the CSE report found that every 100 grams of the snack contains 3.7 grams of trans fats.



"All products manufactured by PepsiCo in India are fully compliant with all the regulations, including those on labelling, prescribed by the FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India)," said PepsiCo. It said that the products under the brands-Lays, Kurkure, Uncle Chips and Cheetos brands are trans-fat free. "We respect the work being done by organizations like CSE to improve consumers' understanding of healthy and balanced diets. Maggi is intended as a light meal and can safely be consumed as part of diversified balanced diet," said Nestle.

"In India we take a lot of effort to ensure our food is safe for our customers and have stringent quality processes at every stage. At McDonald's stores we use RBD Palmolein oil which is naturally trans-fat free," said Mc Donald's. "A child eating one MacDonal's Happy Meals finishes up 90% of all his daily requirement of trans fats. The packet of Happy Meal makes absolutely no mention of this massive dosage of trans fats," said CSE. "What make junk food so unhealthy are the high levels of salt, sugar, fats and carbohydrates in them. Our new study, which looks at the nutritional value of these foods, is to make people aware of what these foods really contain and what they will do to our health," said CSE's director general Sunita Narain. It doesn't take long for kids to discover sweets and junk food. Just like adults, it is not good for young kids to eat too much of these foods. Diets filled with chips, cookies, candies, soda pop, and fast food is often the main cause for weight

problems, both in adults and children. The reason? These foods are usually chockfull of calories, sugar, salt, and fat. So, how can you avoid turning your child into a junk food junkie?

Junk food isn't necessarily a negative part of a person's diet just so long as it is eaten in moderation. Allowing your child a little everyday is okay but the key word here is "little." Having one treat a day (a cookie or a popsicle) is fine. If your toddler is eating two cookies after lunch, a few candies for a snack and then a bowl of ice cream for dessert, there's a problem. If you're tempted to completely remove junk food from your child's diet, you might want to think again. Eliminating junk food will make it forbidden to your child and therefore more desirable. The same goes for using it as a form of reward or punishment. Elevating the status of junk food in anyway will give it a greater importance to your child. It may be difficult, but it is important to strike a balance between making sweets and treats a limited food but at the same time a part of their everyday diet. Also, keep in mind that it is that does the food shopping and controls what foods come into your home. It's not your child. If you have a food drawer or cupboard that is especially for your little one, take a look at what's in it. Junk food can easily fill the cupboards because they are easy finger foods that kids (and adults) can nibble away on without realizing just how much they've eaten. Food labels these days all seem to advertise how their product is improved or better for you than other food products. But it can be hard to decipher just what the labels mean. Reduced fat, low fat, and fat free do not mean the same thing. A product that says it is fat free means that it has less than 0.5g of fat per serving, while a low fat product has less than 3g of fat per serving. Food that is labeled as "reduced fat" will have at least 25% less fat than the original product. Often, foods will say that they are low in saturated fats. This does not necessarily mean that the product is low fat. Rather, it is low in the particular saturated fat. Saturated fat is often seen as a big no-no in people's diet. This is because it can raise cholesterol levels and increases the risk of heart disease. Your child's diet should have about 30% of its calories coming from fat. However, only about 10% of this fat should be saturated. The rest should be made up of monounsaturated fat.



Products labeled as low in cholesterol will contain no more than 20mg of cholesterol per 100g while cholesterol-free food will have a maximum of 3mg per 100g. However, both

will still have up to 2g of saturated fats per serving with 15% of its calories coming from saturated fat. Plus, the product can still be high in fat, so be sure to read the label. Foods that advertise as being calorie-reduced mean that they contain at least 50% less calories than the original product. Light products often allow people to assume that it has lower calorie content, but this isn't always true. A product may just have a lighter amount of salt but still have the same amount of fat and calories. If you see the words "light" or "lite" on the package, make sure you know what it is light in.



It's shocking why asthma is increasing at such a rate in children. Thought, twenty-five years ago, asthma was not that common in medical college practice. In the last 10 years, there has been a steady increase in childhood asthma. At the Respiratory Research Foundation, researchers started looking for reasons and found three important causes: junk foods, passive smoking and lack of exercise.

Researchers believe that junk food may be partly responsible for this increase in asthma. In our surveys, we noticed that prevalence of asthma was more in urban children than in rural areas. This is probably because there are fewer junk food outlets in rural areas. Also, their diet is richer in vitamins and minerals since they rely more on natural foods like fresh vegetables, milk, buttermilk and fruits. It is not uncommon to hear mothers complain that children do not eat fresh fruits. Canned drinks and juices have replaced fresh juices and the result is an increase in asthma. A similar trend was noticed in Jeddah, which adopted westernized foods in some hotels. Researchers examined communities in Saudi Arabia where there were striking allergies across the country. They found that children who lived in the Westernized parts such as Jeddah were at a bigger risk for asthma because, in these areas, the diets are least nutritious. The traditional Arabic diet is based on cow and goat milk, lamb, chicken, rice, vegetables, dates and local vegetables and contains none of the frozen foods increasingly found in city super markets. Our metropolises are no different with multiple super-markets and fast food joints. Not surprisingly asthma in children is increasing.

Prof. Martyn Partridge of the UK's National Asthma Campaign says that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can help prevent children from developing asthma and wheezy diseases. We should take a clue from these studies that show the role of diet in childhood asthma. It is the responsibility of parents,

teachers and physicians to ensure that children learn to enjoy fresh vegetables and fruits so that they do not get addicted to fast food. We also need to deal with the addiction to TV, which leads to lack of exercise and obesity; another contributing cause for asthma.

ALTERNATIVES

There are many alternatives to junk food that can be just as delicious and even seem like junk when it's not. Some easy ways to give your kids a healthier sugar fix include putting a bit of brown sugar on top of a bowl of hot oatmeal or serving some cinnamon toast made with whole wheat bread. When it comes time for dessert, fruit is a great choice that can be just as sweet. Berries, melon and peaches are great solutions to a sweet tooth craving. Serving fruit after meals will also help your child to associate nutritious choices as delicious dessert options.



If nothing but the real thing will do, remember you still have healthier options. When buying ice cream, look for lower-fat versions or sorbets. There are also some great fruit popsicles available made entirely with fruit and fruit juices. These are low in fat and calories but taste even better than their sugary cousins. Instead of buying regular chips, pick up some baked potato or tortilla chips, which are lower in fat.

It's not just snacks that can be problems in your children's diet. Some of the most popular menu items with children can also pack an unhealthy punch when it comes to their nutrition. Hamburgers, fish sticks, hot dogs, French fries and pizza are easy to buy frozen and throw into the oven for a quick meal. But they also tend to have a lot of unhealthy fats and can be

quite high in calories. To make these quickies a bit healthier, look for lower fat versions. Buying fish sticks that are baked instead of fried, hamburgers and hot dogs made with leaner meats and french fries that are low in saturated fats are easy ways to reduce the amount of fat in your child's diet. Also, consider buying vegetarian burgers and hot dogs. These are often low in fat and have just as much, if not more, nutritional value than their meat counterparts.

Just like at home, the staples of a fast food diet are generally not that healthy. If your family only eats out once in a while, then there is not much reason to be overly concerned about the high fat content (although it doesn't hurt to make healthier choices). However, if fast food has become a weekly fixture, then it is necessary make a conscious effort about your food choices. Pay attention to how the food is prepared. If something is deep-fried (like fish and chicken burgers or French fries), it will contain a lot more fat and calories. Pizza can be a good choice if it has lots of veggies with only a little meat piled on top, but steer clear of deep-dish pizza.

Sauces and dips can be hidden sources of fat in many food items. Salad dressing is well known for being high in fat, so ask for yours on the side or see if they have a light option. Likewise, burgers that come with "special sauces" often contain mayonnaise, which will send the fat content through the roof. However, old-fashioned favorites, like ketchup and mustard, rarely have much fat in them, so enjoy! Many fast food restaurants have started producing healthier items on their menu; often stating just how much fat is in a particular "light" item. If the restaurant you're at doesn't have a "light" menu, then look for items that are made with fresh vegetables or whole grains. Most fast food places these days also offer nutritional information about their food; you just need to ask your server.

As your kids grow up, you may start to worry about the influence of junk food in school. Laying the foundation for healthy choices when it comes to sweets and treats now will make it easier for your child to make the right decisions later on.