

# An Overview on Junk Food

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**ABSTRACT:** *Junk food is quick cuisine that is simple to prepare and eat. In 1972, Michael Jacobson used the term "junk food" to describe meals that are either useless or poor in nutritional value. Junk food so called HFSS (High fat, sugar or salt). Cold beverages, pizza, burgers, and sandwiches are just some of the junk food options accessible at restaurants. People all around the globe like eating fast food, therefore the number of fast food restaurants and chains are growing. The nations with the highest junk food consumption include the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Sweden, and others. Junk food is increasingly popular due to the excellent flavor, longer shelf life, and ease of travel. The appeal of junk food is also influenced by junk food advertising. However, due to a lack of energy, excessive cholesterol, and poor focus, it should be avoided. Obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and different kinds of skin malignancies are just a few of the negative effects it has on the body. Eliminating the temptation for junk food and increasing fitness awareness may assist in keeping junk food out of a balanced eating plan.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Junk Food, Cholesterol, Obesity, Burger, Pizza.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Junk food refers to quick cuisine that is simple to prepare and eat. They are poor in nutritional content and contain mainly fat, causing harm to the consumer's health. Michael Jacobson, head of the Center for Science, created the phrase "junk food" in 1972 in the public interest to draw attention to the problem of meals having a high caloric content but poor nutritious value. Junk food is rich in refined sugar, white flour, transfat, polyunsaturated fat salt, and a variety of food additives including monosodium glutamate (MSG) and tartrazine, as well as being low in protein, vitamin, and fiber. Junk food is popular due of its ease of production, consumption, and flavor, as well as the fact that it has a long shelf life and may not need refrigeration. The food standards agency in the United Kingdom does not use the word "junk food," instead referring to food as "HFSS" (high fat, sugar or salt). They claim that such items may be part of a healthy diet, yet studies indicate that children's diets are high in fat (particularly trans fat), salt, and sugar. According to Euro-monitor International study, Americans consume the most fast food, while the Japanese spend the most on takeout (home delivery). The significance of fast food in these nations' lifestyles is shown by the high level of per capita consumption. Burger is the most popular fast food item in the United States, accounting for more than half of all fast food spending[1]–[4].

### *1.1 Problems associated with Junk Food:*

#### *a. High fat content:*

Saturated fats are abundant in junk foods such as hamburgers, pizza, fried chicken, and chips; too much saturated fat in the diet leads individuals to gain weight, and obesity is a danger to heart health and causes other diseases.

*b. High salt content:*

There's a lot of salt in junk food. Foods like bread, morning cereals, and biscuits already contain a lot of salt. As a result, when individuals eat junk food, they consume more salt than they need. Too much salt is harmful to one's health.

*c. High sugar content:*

Sugar is found in soft drinks, cordials, biscuits, cakes, and lollipops, which is why they taste so delicious. However, too much sugar makes people obese, rots teeth, is harmful for the blood, and may cause other diseases. Junk food has certain nutrients that the body need for optimal health, such as salt, fat, and sugar, which the body requires for energy to be used when we play and work. However, too much fat, salt, and sugar is harmful to one's health. To save time, people often settle their meals by eating fast food. Junk food has been linked to dyslexia, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), and autism, according to studies.

*1.2 Types of Junk Food:*

Soft drinks, pizza, hamburgers, potato chips, ice creams, hot dogs, pakora, chowmins, French fries, cheese chili, pav bhaji, and other junk food are among the most popular junk foods available on the market. Fast food in the north, such as hamburgers and french fries from McDonald's, KFC, and Pizza Hut, is generally seen as junk food, while comparable dishes from more up-market restaurants such as Pizza Express or Nando's often have the same or worse nutritional value. Some dishes, such as gyros, pakora, gyoza, and chicharron, are considered ethnic or traditional yet are not typically labeled junk food, despite the fact that they have little nutritional value and are usually heavy in fat from being fried in oil. Breakfast cereals, for example, are often considered as healthful, although they may include high amounts of sugar, salt, and fat[5]–[8].

*1.3 Reasons of Popularity of Junk Food:*

*a. The time Factor:*

Because of its ease, junk food addiction is very common. They are simple to make and delicious. Junk foods like potato wafers and Cheetos don't even need to be heated or cooked. People like to consume them while watching television; they save time and effort when they are in a rush by having pizzas and burgers delivered to their door, hot and ready to eat.

*b. The taste Factor:*

While time constraints are one factor that drives individuals to eat junk food, excellent flavor certainly plays a role in their decision. The excessive use of oils, salts, and sugar in junk foods, on the other hand, gives them their flavor. A study performed by global broadcaster BBC World and renowned market research company Synovate revealed that Britons are more hooked to junk food than any other country. Overall, the study revealed that individuals have different views and behaviors when it comes to junk food. They find it difficult to consider the nutritional loss caused by junk food after they have been addicted to it.

*c. Junk food Advertising:*

Foodies are particularly fond of meals produced outside the house especially restaurant fare. According to estimates, Frito Lays sells a billion bags of Cheetos each year. Advertising for junk food has a significant part in this. Marketing to children is also a source of worry, since children are an easy and prospective target for junk food[9], [10].

*d. Shelf Life:*

Most junk food items, such as chips and wafers, have a lengthy shelf life and don't need to be refrigerated.

*e. Ease of Transportation:*

In comparison to man-made food, junk food is easier to carry owing to its packaging. The convenience of mobility and the availability of junk food are increasing the appeal of junk food every day.

*f. Cost:*

When compared to nutritious food, it is less expensive. The appeal of junk food is partly due to its low cost. Due to its cheap and appealing price range, it is readily accessible to people of all socioeconomic groups.

*1.4 Reasons for Avoiding the Junk Food:*

Here are some junk food facts to assist you comprehend the negative consequences of eating them. Some of these have long-term consequences, while others are just temporary. The fat content is high in cholesterol. Sugar has a high calorie content, which may contribute to obesity. Cholesterol and salt have been linked to a rise in blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease. Excessive salt may affect renal function as well.

*a. Lack of energy:*

This is said to be a short-term unfavorable impact of consuming junk food since junk food lacks important elements [such as vitamins, protein, and fibers], despite the fact that it is extremely sufficient. As a result, individuals feel weaker.

*b. Poor concentration:*

Another side effect of a junk food diet is this. When individuals have a lavish junk meal high in oil, they become sleepy and unable to focus in the short and medium term. Blood circulation decreases as a result of fat buildup, and a lack of essential oxygen, nutrients, and protein, in particular, may temporarily stale their brain cells.

*c. High cholesterol:*

Cholesterol affects the liver, where it is processed, in addition to creating plaques and restricting arteries. High cholesterol from junk food and a poor diet puts a burden on the liver, eventually causing it to fail. This has a long-term impact.

*d. Heart diseases:*

Junk food diet is a leading cause of heart disease (myocardial infarction) due to plaque formation in arteries, which forces the heart to exert extra effort to pump blood downstream while there is a lack of returning blood to the heart upstream, resulting in two damages to the heart: heart fatigue and a reduction in oxygen supply.

*e. Low nutrition value:*

Junk food has a nutritional value of one on a scale of one to ten, which is the lowest. Because the nutritional content of junk food is lost during the manufacturing process, synthetic vitamins and minerals are added to compensate, but they are inferior to natural vitamins and minerals. Junk food lacks natural phytochemicals, which absorb free radicals and help to prevent illness.

*f. Highly addictive:*

Fat and sugar are as addictive as heroin and cocaine because they activate the same brain receptors that make you feel good owing to higher dopamine levels. Junk meals are high in sugar and fat, which makes them addicting and improves the flavor.

*g. Lack of oxygen supply:*

Junk food is high in fat, which may lead to fat buildup in the bronchioles, resulting in a reduction in oxygen supply in the body, which can lead to respiratory problems.

*1.4 Great Reason to Cook Food at Home:*

Homemade cuisine is a better choice than junk food since it offers many benefits. Higher nutritional value, good mental satisfaction, and so on are examples of these.

1. *The Price:* Depending on the establishment, a sample dinner will cost anywhere from \$4 to \$10. Only \$4 can buy a pound of brown rice, a pound of beans, and a pound of frozen broccoli or other vegetable, which is enough for about six meals.
2. *Lose Weight Naturally:* By avoiding chemicals and cutting off the additional fat, sugar, and salt found in junk food, you may lose weight naturally by eating home cooked meals.
3. *Experience Great Flavor:* When compared to junk food, home prepared food has a better taste since it is free of adulteration and extra additives.
4. *More Energy:* When compared to junk food, properly prepared meal contains all of the nutritious content. It gives you more energy in a balanced manner than junk food.
5. *Better Health:* According to several researches, the chemicals (MSG, taste, color additives, and preservatives) found in excessive amounts in junk food may promote obesity, cancer, and neurological problems. Better diet leads to a longer life span and a higher quality of life.
6. *Avoid Traffic:* If food is prepared at home, additional food may be produced and brought for lunch, avoiding the need to go out and travel somewhere at midday and saving time and effort.
7. *Time Saving:* Cooking meals at home takes less time than driving to a fast food restaurant. Even if the restaurant is just next door, ordering and receiving junk food will take 10 to 20 minutes. It would take 30 to 40 minutes to fetch junk food from a restaurant, while meals may be prepared at home in the same amount of time without the trouble.

8. *Satisfaction:* Cooking at home gives you a better sense of accomplishment, as well as the ability to save money, time, and enhance your health.

*1.5 Harmful Effects of Junk Food:*

*a. Obesity:*

It is described as a 20 percent increase in body fat or weight above the optimum. Obesity is a worldwide problem. In industrialized countries, it has reached epidemic proportions and is now classified as a chronic illness.

- Obesity is a multi-factorial energy balance disease in which chronic calorie intake exceeds energy production. It is defined by a high body mass index (BMI), which is calculated as weight (kg) divided by height squared (m<sup>2</sup>).
- A healthy body weight is defined as a BMI of 20-25, overweight is defined as a BMI of 25-30, and obesity is defined as a BMI of > 30. Obesity is mostly treated with a healthy diet and increased activity.
- Obesity affects about 33% of adults in the United States and 15–20% of middle-aged people in Europe. Only a few medicines, such as orlistat, sibutramine, and rimonabant, have been proven to help obese people lose weight.

*b. Diabetes mellitus:*

Hyperglycemia, glycosuria, hyperlipemia, negative nitrogen balance, and ketonemia are all symptoms of this chronic metabolic disease. Type I diabetes (insulin-dependent) and Type II diabetes (non-insulin-dependent) are the two kinds of diabetes (insulin independent). Junk food intake is responsible for almost 90% of Type II diabetes cases.

*c. Hypertension:*

It develops as a result of consuming junk food on a frequent basis. Junk food has a lot of salt, which raises blood pressure and may lead to hypertension. If hypertension isn't managed properly, it can lead to coronary thrombosis, which is very dangerous. Obesity causes primary/essential hypertension.

*d. Heart diseases:*

The plaque development in arteries caused by a junk food diet is a significant cause of heart disease, myocardial infarction, and severe heart failure. Both the onset and the cure require a long time and a lot of effort to succeed.

*e. Dental cavities:*

Excessive intake of junk food causes food to collect on tooth spaces, causing plaque development, which leads to the creation of dental cavities.

*f. Kidney disease:*

Because junk food is high in salt, sugar, and fat, it may lead to kidney problems such as polyuria, renal failure, and hyperuricaemia.

*g. Neurological disorders:*

Excessive junk food consumption causes mental problems such as sleepiness, lethargy, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD], loss of balance, and lack of focus.

## 2. DISCUSSION

Junk food refers to quick cuisine that is simple to prepare and eat. They are poor in nutritional content and contain mainly fat, causing harm to the consumer's health. Salted snack foods, gum, candy, sweet desserts, fried fast food, and sugary carbonated drinks are all examples of junk foods. Many meals, such as hamburgers, pizza, and tacos, may be classified as healthy or unhealthy based on the components used and the technique used to prepare them. Obesity and chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, and certain malignancies may all be exacerbated by eating junk food on a daily basis. The term junk food is not used for food that is ready made containing preservatives such as precooked curries, other packaged food or packaged juices or food available at restaurants since none of those affect the nutritional value. Some packaged foods such as instant noodles might considered healthy if they are made from whole wheat and potato chips if they are oven baked.

## 3. CONCLUSION

Junk food consumption may lead to a variety of health issues. Consumption of junk food is on the rise among the younger population, particularly among youngsters. The major issue with junk food is that it is growing juvenile obesity, which leads to a slew of health issues in youngsters. Children's minds are mainly responsible for their desire to eat junk food as a result of appealing advertising. Multinational corporations use appealing and aggressive marketing tactics to acquire new consumers (young people and children). Parents should monitor their children's eating habits and safeguard them from junk food by raising knowledge of the health risks connected with junk and fast food. Strong willpower and knowledge of the negative consequences of junk food may help you resist the habit. In addition, rather than concentrating only on junk food, the school/college canteen ensures that nutritious food is available on the menu. Children must be taught about the negative consequences of junk food on their health; this will help them avoid junk food and the issues that come with it.

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