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 Everything Wrong With Processed Food In 3000 Words Or Less

 Chicken nuggets are awesome! Who doesn't love that delightful, delectable food? It tastes good, it's quick and easy to make... what's not to like? Well, a lot, actually. Have you ever thought about what they put in those nuggets to make you want to keep on coming back for more? Chances are it isn't very good for you. And it's not alone. Thousands of the most delicious food stuffs are pre-processed and frozen, allowing you to throw them in the microwave and have your dinner in under three minutes. And that's great! As someone who simply can't cook, I know firsthand how amazing warming up a breakfast sandwich already made to perfection and eating it can be. But what I, and a lot of the world, needs to think more about before consuming that kind of stuff are the high levels of Sodium, Trans fats, and other such chemicals included in our meals. Yep, that's right. We're eating chemicals. Is that good? Well, not really. ""Our bodies were not made to digest processed foods, so they don't really know how to use them. As a result, these foods don't give us the fuel our bodies need. Instead they are filled with empty calories," says Shayna Komar, a registered dietition. Consuming processed foods is one of the worst things you could do to yourself.

 But, processed foods are just so easy to make! That's true. A lot of those frozen foods are great for a quick snack. Want some chicken noodle soup? Just add water and heat in a microwave for a few minutes. Do you want to eat pizza without going through the tricky process of ordering it, then going all the way to your front door to get it from the deliverer? Well, stick a frozen one in the oven instead. You like hash browns? Well, that's great, because now those come pre-pattied and ready to warm up. The world of food has made some truly fantastic changes over the last couple of decades, and it really has helped out those who can't or are unable to cook. Just imagine how relieved everyone was when they realized that gone were the days of buying ground beef to make hamburgers. Life became so much easier when manufacturers began selling those with all the delicious spices and seasonings pre-packaged in a pre-processed patty which you wouldn't even have to pre-heat the oven for. It's not just hamburgers that have become a quick fix though. Brands like Banquet sell stakes one can bake for 45 minutes without any of the tricky preparation that you would have had to do before. This is great, because it makes it really easy on the elderly, the visually impaired, the cognitively impaired, the handicapped, and many other people who are unable to effectively wield a spatula(Katz). Personally, I find adding water and warming up mac and cheese is a lot easier than trying to exactly measure out the correct amount via the markings on the block of Velveeta and making my own from scratch. A lot of food is that way, really. Butter has markings that I as a blind individual can't do anything with. Usually I'll have to end up weighing the amount of whatever I cut on a talking scale to make sure it's the right amount. It’s extremely time-consuming and annoying, so having this already done for me before I buy it is awesome.

 Yeah! It's quick, easy to make, and it's also way cheaper than buying all the individual ingredients and preparing them yourself. Also true. A lot of times, frozen meals can be a lifesaver for those on a tight budget. Fresh produce is expensive, and not everyone can just keep on spending and spending and spending on it. And for those who are unable to, canned or frozen ingredients last a long time. Heck, a lot of the time they even come perfectly cut up and ready so you can use them to do anything you might want, which is a big plus. In some cases, the processed food might be better because key nutrients can be sealed in right after harvesting. Processes like freezing do an excellent job of preserving nutritional value, while Processes like cooking can also help. Tomatoes, for example, are rendered more healthy after heat is applied to them because it makes the compound lycopene more easily available to your body (UFIC 3.2). Acording to research, lycopene helps out with heart health and other such bodily upkeep, and it's great to know that the next time you use canned tomatoes. Not only can freezing and cooking save nutrients, it can preserve them for so long that they can be imported and exported. Because of processing, we're able to enjoy "Italian" sausage, "Spanish" rice, and many other foods that would otherwise be geographically unavailable. This can also be a good thing during seasons where crops don't grow as well, like winter. Freezing keeps peaches, pears, oranges, and lots of other fruits perfectly preserved for whenever we might want them.

 Processed food has always been a thing. Like, why does everyone hate it now? That’s a great question, and in fact, it’s true; processed food has been around for hundreds of years. As we’ve already said, processing could mean anything. As long as the food went threw some process before it went through your body, it’s pre-processed. It was actually considered very odd to eat plants and animals without first at least cooking them, and that counts too. Everybody in the past did this. To make food more tasty, our ancestors ground, chopped, leached, curdled, fermented, and cooked plants and animals until they were practically beaten into submission (Laudan). They did all sorts of stuff back then in order to add a little extra to a dish. They’d salt meat. They’d dry it. They’d smoke and cure it. They’d ad oil. They’d ad sugar. They’d even ad vinegar. It’s not only mild forms of processing that were carried out though. There were genetically modified foods galore. People happily abandoned more natural, but less tasty, oranges in favor of juicier fruits which had been breed to be more savory. We modified corn until it almost couldn’t survive without human assistance. We altered naturally occurring squash, soy beans, Papayas and even potatoes. So it isn’t as if non-natural dishes are all that new. We really just have machines doing most of the hard work for us now.

 So with all that in mind, it's certainly hard to understand why people say bad things about food that has been processed before it gets to the public. It's cost-effective, convenient", tastes wonderful, and perhaps most od of all, it’s been around for centuries without it being a problem. So why on earth would anyone have anything against it? Well, I'd welcome you to the age of the almighty dollar, but it's not that welcoming. Allow me to explain. The most common goal of greedy manufacturers in the food industry is to get you, the consumer, to keep coming back to their product for more. In order to do this, they’ll do whatever it takes to make their food presentable on the highest possible level of scrumptious, so that you’ll keep purchasing it. That means adding additives, preservatives, chemicals, compounds, and anything else that might appeal to your tongue. Yeah, so? We already said people did that before with salt, vinegar, and lots of other stuff. True, but there is a reason why additives are a lot worse in present times. The things mixed with food a long time ago were often natural, like sugar and salt. Nothing at all is processed about those ingredients. Now, usually, none of anything added to food is natural; in fact, most of it is manufactured and isn’t very healthy for you. Yes, while too much of anything can be bad for you, and certainly, it was possible to become unhealthy by ingesting products high in salt and sugar before, it is now so much easier to do considering what effects things like high fructose corn syrup and partially hydrogenated vegetable shortening have on your body. In fact, studies show a direct correlation between consumption of pre-processed foods containing additives such as those and obesity. It would seem that obesity is a direct result of an environment that discourages physical activity and promotes an overconsumption of energy-dense foods. In 1978, a study showed that fast and pre-processed foods containing additives and artificial flavors accounted for 18.8 percent of the average American's diet, and in 1996, the percentage increase to 27.3 (Rausser). consequently, the obesity rate in America went from 6.5 percent in 1970 to 15.8 percent at the turn of the century. So clearly, processed food is not something you want to ingest on a regular basis. Sure, there are nutrients and a little vitamin left from the preservation stage. But you will acquire much more unhealthy chemicals than you ever will nutritional compounds. That can of tomatoes I was talking about earlier? Just think about what else manufacturers might have slipped into it. It's never a good sign if you can't pronounce the ingredients on the label.

 Okay, it’s pretty clear that processed food is unhealthy. This is because of all the things manufacturers add to it. But just what effect will those extras have on our body? The most basic outcome things like really high levels of sugar and sodium will have on you is liver damage. As your liver filters materials that aren’t good for your health out of your bloodstream, overloading it by eating a lot of them would likely be a bad idea. On top of that, ingesting large amounts of fatty processed foods will put too much strain on your cells. They won’t be able to handle all of the glucose and fats quickly enough, thus, a lot of excess waste will begin to build up. After that, your immune system will start to take notice of all that junk, and begin to attack your insulin, which is attempting to prevent more and more waste from entering your cells, which would give the cells a chance to clear up the huge backlog of unprocessed glucose(Lesica 90). So, you’ve got a lot of stuff in you and your body can’t deal with it fast enough. This will eventually lead to weight gain, But you love what you eat; it’s just so good. Lays has you hooked on its potato chips. And ignoring your cravings is a terrible idea. So what should you do? Just keep eating, it’ll be fine. You’re body will catch up with you somehow. Or will it? If you continue to consume pre-processed foods, your insulin will never work. You’re liver will continue to release glucose your muscles aren’t using. Your fat cells will continue to release fats, and because you aren’t burning off glucose, Your liver will combine all of it with fat. It will all be bundled into packages that are regularly sent throughout your body, and if your waste and immune cells can’t clear those up quickly, the packages will eventually accumulate into a disgusting plaque that may clog one of your blood vessels(Lesica 90). And that may lead to a heart attack or a stroke.

 I’m not saying this is what will definitely happen to you if you eat food that’s processed. But it certainly is a possibility. If you don’t treat your body right and burn some of the waste you ingest, you are all the more likely to suffer by the procedures outlined above. But let’s say you do exercise regularly and your muscles use the glucose your liver puts out. There shouldn’t be any problems then, right? Well, yes, but actually no… because at the end of the day we still have to worry about the chemicals we’re consuming. Some of the most common additives in food are preservatives, which prevent bacteria from growing and make the product keep longer Lesica 91). I know that sounds good, but things that prevent bacteria from growing on food also prevent natural gut bacteria from growing too. Gut bacteria plays some really important roles in keeping you healthy, such as communicating with your immune system and creating some vitamins. It can even output chemicals that make you feel full, and if you eat preservatives that harm them, guess what? You’ll never know when enough is enough. You won’t feel like you’ve eaten your fill, which could also lead to weight gain. So why take the risk of consuming preservatives, when you could be safe and eat fresh food? It’s a no-brainer. It’s not like they make it taste any better. You are losing nothing except the ability to store your food for extended periods of time. And how bad is that, really?

 But what about processed meats? So far, we’ve gone over general effects of processed food on your body, as well as what happens when you eat too much of it, but what about protein, which is an essential part of any diet? Well, remember those chicken nuggets we talked about earlier? Well they’re good, sure, and you could get your protein from them, but what’s inside every bite you take? Let’s look at the ingredients listed on the bag. Maltodextrin, sea salt, sunflower oil, cream (milk), rice flour, cooked chicken, chicken fat, yeast, caramel color, malted barley flour, spices, natural flavors, soy lecithin. Breading set in vegetable oil. What is any of that? Well, Maltodextrin is pretty much corn syrup, but the only difference between the two is the higher sugar content in Maltodextrin. It carries a significant risk of increasing blood sugar and is safe in small amounts. But are you eating it in small amounts? That would Depend on how much you enjoy the included “Natural Flavors,” which, remember, were put in there to make you want to keep buying more and more chicken nuggets. You are additionally ingesting caramel coloring, which sounds harmless… it just exists to turn things brown, like the breading of the nuggets. But studies show that it contains a potentially carcinogenic chemical called methylimidazole. After looking at three out of the fifteen listed ingredients, I already don’t ever want to eat another nugget. But you may not share that opinion. And that’s fine. However, you should consider a study performed on how eating processed meat increases your likelihood of getting cancer or gliomas (which means tumor). Individuals who consumed at least four processed meats on a regular basis, such as hot dogs, lunch meat, bacon, or sausage, were statistically shown to have more than seventeen times the risk of developing a

 brain tumor as those who consumed less(Helzlsouer ).

 Does it really matter all that much though? Yes, yes it does. I know that food that is manufactured to taste better does an excellent job of it, but really, eating right can do you good in the long run. Pre-processed foods have been proven to cause obesity, heart disease, and even cancer. In order to maintain a healthy lifestyle, it is important to limit your intake of preservatives, additives, and other harmful chemicals and consume more nutritional items. It may be more pricy, but have you ever considered how much of an effect the right food can have on your appearance? There are obvious answers along the lines of “If I eat healthy I won’t look fat.” But it goes deeper than that. If you eat the right things, like vegetables, nuts, lean fruit, and protein, as well as do a little exercise, you might actually begin to develop some noticeable core muscle. Who wouldn’t want a six-pack? In all seriousness though, it is important to eat non-processed food and more fresh things. Benefits include better sleep, better brain function, a better immune system, and stronger bones. Buying food that’s already perfectly ready to eat is amazing. It’s great if you can’t or don’t like cooking. And most of all, it’s way cheaper. But as a blind person and athlete who has extreme difficulty preparing a meal, I find it’s worth however much I have to put into it to be in the best shape I can.

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