

Ultra-processed foods: The research and the reality



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FOLLOW-UP HANDOUT

Nova food classification system

Group	Definition
GROUP 1: Unprocessed or minimally processed foods	Foods from nature with inedible parts removed
GROUP 2: Processed culinary ingredients	Foods from group 1 in a different form
GROUP 3: Processed foods	Foods from group 1 or 2 made by adding salt, sugar, oil or fat, or using preservation methods such as canning and bottling
GROUP 4: Ultra-processed foods	Industrially manufactured food products made up of several ingredients (formulations) and food substances of no or rare culinary use (industrial use ingredients)

Definitions adapted from: Martinez-Steele, E.; Khandpur, N.; Batis, C.; Bes-Rastrollo, M.; Bonaccio, M.; Cediël, G.; Huybrechts, I.; Juul, F.; Levy, R.B.; da Costa Louzada, M.L., et al. Best practices for applying the Nova food classification system. *Nature Food* 2023, 4, 445–448, doi:10.1038/s43016-023-00779-w.

2025–2030 DGA Scientific Advisory Committee conclusions on ultra-processed foods from systematic reviews

Life stage	Conclusion statement	Strength of evidence
Children and adolescents	Dietary patterns with higher amounts of UPF are associated with greater adiposity and risk of obesity/overweight	Limited
Adults and older adults (19+)	Dietary patterns with higher amounts of UPF are associated with greater adiposity and risk of obesity/overweight	Limited
Infants and young children (up to 24 months)	A conclusion statement cannot be drawn because of concerns about consistency and directness in body of evidence	Grade not assignable
Individuals during pregnancy and post-partum	A conclusion statement cannot be drawn because there is not enough evidence available	Grade not assignable

Adapted from: 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. Scientific Report of the 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee: Advisory Report to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and Secretary of Agriculture; 2024.

Additional references and resources:

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