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Effect Of Fast Food On Human Health

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Abstract: Food is necessary for human survival; it plays a vital role in the growth and development of the body as it proffers nutrition. Fast food, being convenient to eat and ready to eat, is consumed widely. The prime consideration for society preferring fast food is that life today is fast-paced. However, this facility comes with massive impediments to health, both physical and mental. Several studies have found that the high levels of saturated fats, trans fatty acids, high salt content, and poor nutritional value of fast food products probably contribute to the prevalence of type II diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and cardiovascular disease in Westernized societies. It contains a lot of processed ingredients and preservatives, as well as sugar, salt, and saturated or trans fats. The present review describes the effect of such foods on human health.

Key words: Fast food, diabetes, sugar, trans fat, obesity

Introduction:

Food is one of the basic necessities of life. Food contains nutrients which are essential for the growth, repair, and maintenance of body tissues and for the regulation of vital processes. The habit of taking food also varies from society to society. Globalization and urbanization have greatly affected ones eating habits and forced many people to consume fancy and high calorie fast foods, popularly known as Junk food or Fast food. Fast food is an important item of the food as it is readymade in nature and easy to eat. Food eaten outside the home is now becoming a significant and regular component of life. Fast food is often nutritionally poor and high in calories. Several studies have found that the high levels of saturated fats, trans fatty acids, high salt content, and poor nutritional value of fast food products probably contribute to the prevalence of type II diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and cardiovascular disease in Westernized societies. It contains a lot of processed ingredients and preservatives, as well as sugar, salt, and saturated or trans fats (Timothy Huzar, 2021). The present review describes the association between the consumption of such foods and health outcomes. Evidence demonstrates that overeating commercial fast food products can negatively impact health in both the short- and long-term.

Today, multinational corporations like McDonald's, KFC, and Pizza Hut have gone worldwide-globalized, and even McDonald's and KFC have come to cities, growing rapidly. Because of the so many responsibilities on the shoulders of modern life citizens, little time is left for preparing home-cooked meals which pushed them to consume fast food. These fast food chains just purposely attracted to consumers by speed, price-value, and customizing options (Mahankali Prameela, 2015).

In the short term, fast food impacts blood sugar and blood pressure, increases inflammation, and may mean an individual does not eat enough necessary nutrients. In the long term, a diet rich in fast food could lead to issues with digestion, immunity, inflammation, heart health, obesity, and more.

Fast food contains :

Sugar: These foods contain carbohydrates, which are broken down in the digestive system and released into the circulation as glucose or sugar. As a result, the blood sugar climbs. Pancreas releases insulin in response to the spike in blood sugar. Our body uses insulin to move sugar to the cells that require it for energy. Blood sugar levels return to normal when our body consumes or stores the sugar. Our body regulates this blood sugar mechanism very well. However, eating a lot of carbohydrates on a regular basis can cause blood sugar to increase repeatedly.

Body's insulin response may eventually falter as a result of repeated insulin increases. This raises the chance of type 2 insulin resistance i.e. type II diabetes mellitus.

Trans Fat: Another common fast food ingredient trans fat which is manufactured fat created during food processing. It's commonly found in fried pies, pastries, pizza dough, crackers and cookies. No amount of trans fat is good or healthy. Eating foods that contain it can increase your LDL (bad cholesterol), lower your HDL (good cholesterol) and increase risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Sodium: Fat, sugar, and especially a lot of sodium (or salt) make fast food so popular. But eating a lot of sodium makes you retain water, which is why you feel puffy, bloated, or swollen after eating fast food. High sodium is also dangerous for someone suffering from the blood pressure condition because sodium elevates blood pressure and puts pressure on the heart and blood cardiovascular system. One study showed that 90% of the adults underestimated how much sodium they were consuming from fast food meals.

It is very essential to note that the FDA advises adults not to eat more than 2,300 milligrams sodium per day because more than 70% sodium is derived from processed food and restaurant meals.

Effect of Fast food on different systems of our body:

A. Digestive System

Regularly eating fast food can have a number of negative effects on digestive system. It may causes:

- **Digestive disorders:** Fast food can cause indigestion, increased acidity, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).
- **Bloating:** Fast food can cause bloating, nausea, and stomach pain.
- **Constipation:** Fast food is low in fiber, which can lead to constipation.
- **Stomach ulcers:** Eating fast food regularly can increase the risk of stomach ulcers.
- **Liver damage:** Eating fast food can damage the liver over.
- **Kidney damage:** Eating fast food can affect kidney function because the kidneys filter toxins from the blood.

B. Respiratory System

Fast food can negatively affect the respiratory system in several ways:

- **Weight gain:** The extra calories from fast food can lead to weight gain and obesity, which can increase the risk of respiratory problems like asthma and shortness of breath.
- **Inflammation:** A poor-quality diet like fast food can increase inflammation in the body, which can make asthma symptoms worse.
- **Fluid retention:** Fried foods and excessive salt can worsen respiratory conditions by causing fluid retention.
- **Oxidative stress:** Processed meats, sugary drinks, and trans fats can increase oxidative stress, which harms lung function.

C. Central nervous system:

Fast food can have negative effects on the central nervous system (CNS), including:

- **Reduced neuroplasticity:** Fast food diets can reduce neuroplasticity, which is important for learning new things and forming new memories.
- **Reduced neurogenesis:** Junk food can reduce the generation of new neurons, which are essential for forming new memories.
- **Increased risk of depression:** People who eat fast food and processed pastries are 51% more likely to develop depression.

- **Increased risk of neurological conditions:** Fast food consumption has been linked to an increased risk of developing neurological conditions such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.
- **CNS insulin resistance:** Fast food can promote CNS insulin resistance, which can lead to reduced energy expenditure and continued food consumption.

D. Cardiovascular system

Fast food can have a negative impact on our cardiovascular system in several ways:

- **High blood pressure:** Fast food is often high in sodium, which can increase blood pressure and put stress on heart. High blood pressure can lead to heart attack, stroke, and heart failure.
- **Inflammation:** Fast food can cause inflammation, which can lead to plaque buildup in arteries.
- **Weight gain:** Fast food is often high in calories, fat, and sugar, which can lead to weight gain.
- **Heart palpitations:** High-carbohydrate foods, like fast food, can cause blood sugar levels to spike, which can lead to heart palpitations.

E. Reproductive System:

Eating fast food can negatively impact reproductive health in both men and women:

- **Infertility:** A study of 5,598 women found that those who ate fast food four or more times a week were 16% less likely to conceive within a year than those who ate it rarely or never.
- **Hormonal issues:** Fast food can cause hormonal problems that can negatively impact fertility.
- **Weight gain:** Fast food can lead to rapid weight gain which can increase estrogen levels and lead to ovarian cysts.
- **Oxidative stress:** Junk food lacks micronutrients like antioxidants which can lead to oxidative stress that harms reproductive cells.
- **Chemicals:** Fast food contains chemicals like phthalates that can disrupt hormone function and lead to reproductive issues including developmental issues for a foetus.
- **Trans fats:** Research proves that high consumption of trans fats cause infertility in both men and women.
- **Sperm count:** Studies have concluded that excessive fast food intake might decrease sperm concentration.

F. Skeletal System:

Fast food can negatively impact the skeletal system in a number of ways, including:

- **Bone density:** Fast food is often high in unhealthy fats and sodium, and low in essential nutrients. This can increase the risk of bone issues.
- **Bone quality:** Obesity caused by fast food can lead to lowered bone quality and a higher risk of breaking bones.
- **Joint health:** Excess weight from fast food can put extra pressure on joints, especially hips and knees, making more likely to get fractures.
- **Cavities:** The carbs and sugar in fast food can increase acids in the mouth, which can break down tooth enamel and lead to cavities.
- **Skeletal growth:** A study found that ultra-processed foods can have a negative impact on skeletal growth.
- **Obesity:** Obesity can also lead to complications with our bone density and muscle mass. People with obesity may have lowered bone quality and a higher risk of breaking bones, especially among older adults.

G. Integumentary System:

Fast food can negatively impact our skin, hair, and nails, which are part of the integumentary system:

- **Acne:** Fast food can cause acne due to its high levels of saturated fats which trigger hormones that contribute to acne. Fast food can also cause excess sebum production which can clog pores and lead to acne.
- **Wrinkles:** Fast food can cause wrinkles due to its high sugar content, which can damage collagen and elastin in the skin.
- **Dehydration:** Fast food can dehydrate skin due to its high salt content.

- **Inflammation:** Fast food can cause inflammation, which can exacerbate skin conditions like acne, eczema, and psoriasis.
- **Oxidative stress:** Fast food can lead to oxidative stress in the body, which can damage skin cells.
- **Premature aging:** Fast food can accelerate the aging process due to a lack of essential nutrients and antioxidants.

H. Mental Health

Fast food can negatively impact mental health in several ways including:

- **Depression:** People who eat a lot of fast food are 51% more likely to develop depression than those who eat little or none.
- **Anxiety:** Fast food consumption is linked to a 48–53% higher risk of anxiety and other common mental health disorders.
- **Stress:** Combining high consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and fast food is associated with increased stress.
- **Suicidal ideation:** Combining high consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and fast food is associated with increased suicidal ideation.
- **Psychiatric distress:** Fast food consumption has been linked to psychiatric distress in adolescents.
- **Violent behaviors:** Fast food consumption has been linked to violent behaviors in adolescents.
- **Impulsivity:** Fast food consumption has been linked to impulsivity in adolescents. Eating a healthy diet can help improve mental well-being.

Conclusion

Eating junk food can lead to: type 2 diabetes, heart-related problems (such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol), overweight and obesity, osteoporosis, certain cancers, depression, eating disorders etc. The leading reasons for unhealthy eating habits (fast food) were taste (78.9%), increased online food delivery (75.7%), and attractive advertisements (74.3%). A healthy diet includes: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, olive oil, low fat dairy products and antioxidants which is very beneficial for our health.

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