



Barca
LEEDS

Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)

A guide to

Useful links

The NHS website has information on processed foods and how to have a balanced diet.



The NHS food scanner app can help you find healthier swaps for the next time you shop.



Tutorials on how to cook healthy meals on the West Leeds Recipe Station YouTube Playlist.



Find low cost recipes in the West Leeds Recipe Station Cookbook.



Thanks to Leeds Trinity University whose team of Nursing students produced the content for this leaflet after speaking to over 100 parents about UPFs in order to get a better understanding of what they knew, why they might buy UPFs and what may help them make a change.



What are Ultra Processed Foods (UPFs)?

UPFs are foods that are heavily processed and have lots of added ingredients including sugars, salts, fats and chemical additives which can make them addictive.

In the UK, UPFs are popular as they are cheap, last longer and are easy to make. Think fizzy sweetened drinks, packaged snacks and sweets, ready meals and sauces, and processed meats as some examples.

A 2019 study found that 57% of the UK diet is made up of UPF's and among children and poorer communities it could be as high as 80%.

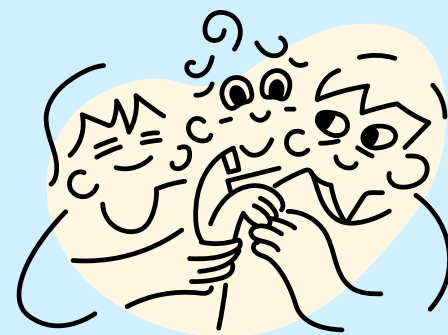
What are the health impacts?

When you're munching on these quick-fix snacks, you're sidelining fruits, veggies, and fibre-essentials for a happy, healthy gut and smooth digestion.

Unlike whole foods, ultra-processed foods are broken down and dressed up with additives and preservatives, making your body absorb more fat.

What are the main health issues linked to these foods? Think:

- poor gut health,
- hypertension (high blood pressure)
- heart disease,
- strokes,
- obesity,
- type 2 diabetes,
- and even some cancers.



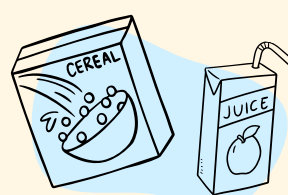
Why do we consume them?

Urban living and hectic schedules have us reaching for ready-to-eat meals like never before!



Access to ultra-processed foods
Thanks to global manufacturing, UPFs are everywhere, flaunting vibrant packaging that says "buy me!"

Misleading food labels trick people into buying food that they think is healthy, when in reality it's not. They often include cheap ingredients like salt, sugar and fat.



Kids love them too
Who could say no to colourful boxes and sugary flavours?

Yet, many people don't realise just how common these foods are.

So, for a healthier you and your family, let's swap those ultra-processed bites for nature's finest!

How can we reduce the use of UPFs?



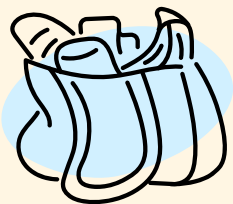
Whip Up Wonders at Home

Dive into the joy of cooking from scratch with fresh, whole ingredients for delicious control over your meals. Check out the Barca-Leeds Recipe Station Cookbook for recipe ideas or watch our YouTube videos for some quick easy meals.



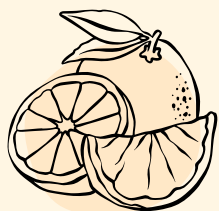
Label Detective

When shopping, be a savvy sleuth and skip those products with mile-long lists of mystery additives.



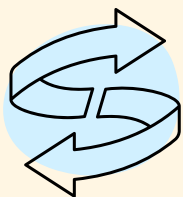
Perimeter Power

Stick to the supermarket's outer rim where fresh produce, meats, and dairy await, dodging processed pit stops.



Whole Food Heroes

Fill your plate with colourful fruits, vegetables, wholesome grains, and nuts to boost nutrition and flavour.



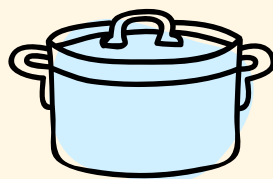
Sugar Swap

Ditch sugary snacks and fizzy drinks for juicy fruits, crunchy nuts, or a refreshing homemade iced tea.



Start Small

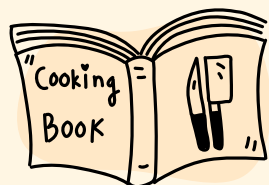
Try adding small amounts of veg to your favourite meals, make muffins using vegetables or use veggies as a spoon for dips. Encourage children to help out with shopping and preparing veggies.



Batch Bliss

Cook, freeze, and savour ready-made home-cooked goodness.

No freezer? Try 'cook once, eat twice' recipes. Or get creative with 4 common kitchen staples.



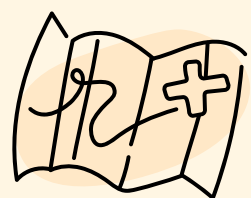
Recipe Adventure

Spice things up with new recipes that showcase whole ingredients, making every meal an exciting journey.



Mindful Munching

Tune into your body's hunger signals and savour every bite to keep snacking at bay.



Plan Ahead

UPFs are convenient and some people buy them when they are in a hurry. Plan ahead so you carry a healthy snack rather than buy a bar of chocolate, or so you have an easy to prepare meal to go home to at the end of a busy day.

There are fun and easy ways to make healthier choices. Parents can get the kids in on the action with DIY snacks, and keep an eye on ingredient lists to dodge additives.



The Yuka App provides a comprehensive assessment of food and cosmetic products, including their level of processing, nutritional value, and potential health risks.



Children who struggle with food

Find lots of information on eating, drinking and diet for neurodivergent young people on the Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust website.



What are additives and preservatives?

Additives are chemicals added to foods to keep them fresh or to enhance their colour, flavour or texture.

Preservatives are food additives that play an important role in making foods last longer or taste better. Some are made of synthetic chemicals.

Making a change

Think about some areas where you feel that you eat some UPFs that you could swap out of your meal.

List below some of the UPFs that you think you have too much of - what are they?

What can you replace them with?

For example a pasta sauce could be replaced with a tin of tomatoes and some fresh veg mixed in.

How can you get your family on board?
