



# HOW TO **REDUCE** ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS IN YOUR DIET

Processed foods are convenient and save time. Choosing minimally processed, instead of ultra-processed, foods can reduce the amount of sodium, fats, sugars and preservatives on your plate. Try these tips to kick-start healthy new habits.

## 1. Don't go cold turkey

If you're currently eating a lot of highly processed foods, ease into better buying habits. For many people, gradual changes are more likely to be successful in the long term.

## 2. Supplement meals with fresh foods

Adding fresh fruit or a freshly prepared salad to your meal is an easy way to strike a better balance between processed and unprocessed foods. Aim for filling half your plate with fresh ingredients.

## 3. Drink less sugar-sweetened beverages

If plain water leaves you thirsting for more flavor, try carbonated water or add fruit to your glass.

## 4. Put down the salt shaker

If you're craving a flavor boost, add garlic, pepper or other seasonings

## 5. Choose whole grains over processed grains

Try brown rice, whole wheat pasta and whole grain bread. These nutritious swaps are nuttier-tasting and more filling than their traditional "white" alternatives.

## 6. Limit or avoid processed meats

Bacon, ham, hot dogs and sausage have been linked to an increased risk of colorectal cancer. Avoid these foods as much as possible.



## 7. Plan ahead

If you're in a hurry — and who isn't — highly processed convenience foods are tempting. Instead, try setting out portions of trail mix, veggies with hummus, Greek yogurt cups or fruit on the weekends so they're ready during busy weekdays.

## 8. Make smart substitutions

Love to crunch on potato chips? Try air-popped popcorn with a dash of chili powder or Parmesan cheese. Swap out sugar-sweetened breakfast cereal for unsweetened oatmeal and fresh fruit.



## 9. Make your own versions of popular processed foods

Homemade kale chips, granola and salads are delicious and healthier than grocery store versions. For a quick and easy salad dressing, whisk together three tablespoons of olive oil and one tablespoon of vinegar. For a tasty twist, use a blender to combine oil and vinegar with a small handful of fresh berries.

## 10. Make healthier versions of frozen meals

Do your batch cooking on the weekends and freeze meals for the week ahead. Try homemade mac-and-cheese with whole wheat pasta or turkey burgers with a side of sautéed veggies.

## 11. Don't be fooled by advertising

Clever packaging touting “fat-free” or “sugar-free” does not guarantee a healthy product. Read the nutrition labels and be on the lookout for artificial ingredients, added sugar and other processing additives.

## 12. Practice moderation

Processed foods are neither new nor inherently bad. They're convenient and allow us to access foods that would otherwise perish in transit. Enjoy them in moderation and use common sense.



**Why are some of our favorite foods considered ultra-processed? Click on each link to find out.**

- Bacon
- Granola bars
- Flavored nuts
- Microwave popcorn
- Dried fruit
- Fruit snacks
- Margarine
- Ketchup
- Instant ramen
- Frozen dinners

