

**Extra Reading Practice – Risks of Processed Food**

**The Risks of Ultra-Processed Food**

I  
II  
Everyone knows that food which contains too much sugar and fat is unhealthy, but now the new enemy is ultra-processed food. It leads directly to poorer health, increased weight and a rise in the risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease. Despite these findings, ultra-processed food production and consumption are steadily increasing in both high-income and low-income countries. It is estimated that the average person in some countries gets over 50% of their calorie intake from ultra-processed food.

III  
IV  
Ultra-processed food often contains more than five ingredients that have been created in a laboratory. These include chemicals, colourings, sweeteners and preservatives. Natural yoghurt is a food that is unprocessed, but once sweeteners or any flavouring is added, it's classified as ultra-processed. Pre-packaged meals, breakfast cereals, biscuits, buns, cakes and most breads are also examples of ultra-processed food. Besides being unhealthy, ultra-processed food is advertised by aggressive marketing campaigns, often directed at children.

V  
Several medical studies have demonstrated the detrimental effects of ultra-processed food. In one study, 20 volunteers were kept in a laboratory for a month and fed two different kinds of diets. Half the group ate as much ultra-processed food as they wanted, and the other group were given unprocessed food, including fresh fruit and vegetables and natural animal products. On average, the people on the ultra-processed diet consumed around 500 calories more a day and consequently put on weight. This suggests that the increase in the consumption of ultra-processed food is the cause of the obesity epidemic.

A much larger, longer-term study, carried out among almost 20,000 people in Navarra, Spain, over a ten-year period, examined their diet and found that out of 335 people who died over the period, the proportion of those who had eaten greater amounts of ultra-processed food was higher than those who hadn't. Studies in France, with even larger population samples, revealed cardiovascular disease and certain forms of cancer were higher among people who ate more of this type of food.

Now, some consumer groups are calling for a food-labelling system that would, in addition to listing the nutrient value of food products, inform consumers about the level of processing in the food they are buying in shops and supermarkets. Hopefully, this will help lower the high rates of obesity that so many countries are now facing.

**1 Choose the correct answer.**

- 1 According to the author, ...
  - a everyone knows which food is the new enemy
  - b ultra-processed food is linked directly to cancer
  - c ultra-processed food consumption is rising not only in low-income countries
  
- 2 Which of the following is NOT true about ultra-processed food?
  - a It is made in a lab.
  - b It contains artificial ingredients.
  - c It is aimed at young people.

**2 Decide if the following sentences are true (T) or false (F). Find evidence in the text to support your answers.**

- 1 All yoghurts are considered unprocessed food. ....  
.....
  
- 2 The participants in the first study remained in the lab for a month. ....  
.....
  
- 3 Various consumer groups are demanding that ultra-processed foods be banned from supermarkets.  
.....  
.....

**3 Answer the following questions.**

- 1 How can unprocessed food become ultra-processed? Give an example.  
.....
  
- 2 How do consumer groups want to change food labelling?  
.....

**4 Find words or expressions in the text that mean:**

- 1 continually (paragraph I) .....
- 2 the amount of food or drink consumption at a particular time (paragraph I) .....
- 3 harmful (paragraph III) .....
- 4 demanding (paragraph V) .....
- 5 dealing with (paragraph V) .....

**Answer Key**

1 1 c 2 a

2 1 F – “... but once sweeteners or any flavouring are added, it’s classified as ultra-processed.”

2 T – “... 20 volunteers were kept in a laboratory for a month.”

3 F – “Now, some consumer groups are calling for a food labelling system ... .”

3 1 Once sweeteners or flavouring is added to unprocessed food, like natural yoghurt, it becomes ultra-processed.

2 In addition to labelling the nutrient value of food products, consumer groups want to add the level of processing.

4 1 steadily                      4 calling for

2 intake                         5 facing

3 detrimental