

# FOODS THAT HARM THE BRAIN

## THE COMPLEXITY AND SOPHISTICATION OF THE HUMAN BRAIN

means that it is very sensitive to both nutrient deficiencies and foods that contain harmful compounds. The brain is also extremely energy demanding because it is busy 24/7.

When people eat a lot of processed foods that contain very little of the specific nutrients that the brain needs, the brain can become deficient in those nutrients. In addition, those foods also contain very little fibre which the gut needs. Without a healthy gut we don't get the quantity and quality of the nutrients we need for optimal brain function.

Processed foods also contain quick release glucose, which doesn't keep the brain energised in the way it requires energy. Most processed foods also contain the following damaging compounds, which either alone or combined harm our sophisticated and sensitive brain:

**Trans fats** are fats that have been damaged via processing and no longer function as good fats do. They get stuck in all our cell membranes and wreak havoc in neuronal membranes which need to be especially flexible to support our busy brain.

Why does this matter to the brain? As 60% of the dry weight of the brain is composed of fat, we know that the kind of fat we eat directly impacts the brain and can affect how it develops and ages. Eating toxic fats, like trans fats, is therefore dangerous because it interferes with how neurons function and stops them from communicating effectively.



These toxic fats, and others like them, with more complex names, are found in many foods including spreads, mayonnaise, baked goods like crackers and cookies, dips, dressings, and fast meals.

**Concentrated forms of sugar (CFOS)** are found in most processed foods and are not the ideal source of glucose for your brain, because they give a big spurt of energy followed by a big letdown a short while later. Research has clearly shown that people with a disturbed insulin response, such as in type 2 diabetes, are more prone to cognitive decline with age, and eating these foods increases the risk of getting type 2 diabetes.

Furthermore, when blood glucose drops too low, after a bout of processed food consumption, the adrenal glands produce cortisol, which stimulates glucose release from the liver, to keep the brain fuelled. This 'up and down' glucose response leads to mood swings and memory challenges, and increases stress levels.

The foods where CFOS are found include lollies/candy, sodas, energy drinks and fruit drinks, sauces, instant sweet and savory sauces, jams and other sweetened spreads, baked goods, and breakfast cereals.

Additives are used in processed foods to ensure they stay shelf-stable and to ensure they look and taste as enticing as possible. Unfortunately, most of these additives are composed of chemicals that aren't found in nature and which the body and brain don't recognise.

Unfortunately, it is also easy to become used to eating processed foods because they contain a lot of flavourants that fool our taste buds into thinking the food tastes better than it really does.



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