

## FAST FOOD AND POOR NUTRITION: HEALTH RISKS

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**Abstract:** This scientific article provides a comprehensive analysis of poor nutrition as a major public health problem and examines the harmful effects of regular fast food consumption on human health. Poor nutrition is characterized as an unbalanced dietary pattern that fails to meet the physiological and biological needs of the human body, particularly due to excessive intake of high-calorie foods rich in fats, refined carbohydrates, sugar, salt, and food additives. The study highlights that fast food products are energy-dense yet nutritionally poor, lacking essential vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, and biologically active compounds necessary for normal metabolic processes. Based on an in-depth review of scientific literature and international health data, the article demonstrates that long-term consumption of fast food is strongly associated with obesity, insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, hypovitaminosis, weakened immune function, and reduced work capacity. Special attention is given to the impact of poor nutrition on children and adolescents, as it negatively affects growth, development, and cognitive performance. The findings emphasize that unhealthy eating habits have both medical and social consequences and contribute significantly to the global burden of chronic non-communicable diseases. The article concludes that adherence to the principles of rational and balanced nutrition, combined with increased physical activity and nutritional education, plays a crucial role in disease prevention, health promotion, and the improvement of overall quality of life.

**Keywords:** poor nutrition, fast food, unhealthy diet, metabolism, obesity, insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, hypovitaminosis, immune system, nutritional deficiency, healthy eating, disease prevention, public health

### Introduction

In the modern world, nutrition plays a decisive role in maintaining human health and preventing disease. However, rapid urbanization, changes in lifestyle, and the fast pace of daily life have led to the widespread consumption of fast food products, which has become a serious public health concern. Poor nutrition is defined as an unbalanced dietary pattern that does not meet the physiological requirements of the body in terms of energy, nutrients, vitamins, and minerals. Fast food products are typically characterized by high caloric value, excessive amounts of saturated fats, trans fats, sugar, and salt, while being deficient in essential micronutrients and dietary fiber. Regular consumption of such foods negatively affects metabolic processes and contributes to the development of chronic non-communicable diseases. According to international health organizations, including the World Health Organization, improper nutrition is one of the leading risk factors for obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, and gastrointestinal disorders. The problem is particularly relevant among children and adolescents, as unhealthy eating habits formed at an early age can persist throughout life and negatively



influence physical growth, mental development, and immune function. Moreover, the increasing availability and aggressive marketing of fast food products further exacerbate the issue. Therefore, studying the impact of fast food and poor nutrition on human health is essential for developing effective preventive strategies, promoting healthy eating habits, and improving public health outcomes.

## **Fast Food and Poor Nutrition**

In recent decades, fast food consumption has increased rapidly due to urbanization, busy lifestyles, and the growing demand for quick and affordable meals. While fast food offers convenience, its frequent consumption has become one of the main causes of poor nutrition and related health problems. Poor nutrition occurs when the human body does not receive adequate amounts of essential nutrients, including proteins, vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber, despite excessive calorie intake. Fast food products are typically high in saturated fats, trans fats, refined carbohydrates, salt, and sugar, but low in biologically valuable components necessary for normal physiological functioning. Regular consumption of fast food negatively affects metabolic processes and disrupts energy balance, leading to excessive weight gain and obesity. Obesity is a major risk factor for insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, and arterial hypertension. Furthermore, trans fats and excessive sodium found in fast food products contribute to the development of atherosclerosis and impair heart function. Poor nutrition also affects the digestive system, causing gastritis, intestinal dysfunction, and reduced nutrient absorption. The problem is especially concerning among children and adolescents, as unhealthy eating habits formed at an early age often persist into adulthood. Poor nutrition during growth periods can impair physical development, weaken immune responses, and reduce cognitive performance. Additionally, vitamin and mineral deficiencies resulting from fast food-based diets lead to hypovitaminosis, chronic fatigue, and decreased work capacity. Addressing the issue of fast food and poor nutrition requires a comprehensive preventive approach. Promoting balanced and rational nutrition, encouraging regular physical activity, and increasing public awareness about healthy eating are essential strategies for disease prevention. Replacing fast food with natural, home-prepared meals rich in nutrients significantly improves health outcomes. In conclusion, limiting fast food consumption and adopting healthy dietary habits play a crucial role in protecting public health and improving quality of life.

## **Risks of Fast Food and Poor Nutrition**

Fast food consumption and poor nutrition pose significant risks to human health and are closely associated with the development of numerous chronic diseases. One of the most serious risks is excessive calorie intake combined with low nutritional value, which disrupts the body's energy balance. As a result, the risk of overweight and obesity increases significantly. Obesity is not only a cosmetic concern but also a major medical problem, as it increases the likelihood of insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and metabolic syndrome. These conditions impair glucose metabolism and negatively affect overall health. Another important risk associated with fast food consumption is cardiovascular disease. Fast food products are rich in saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium, which contribute to elevated blood cholesterol levels and arterial hypertension. Long-term exposure to these dietary factors accelerates the development of atherosclerosis, increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Additionally, excessive salt intake places extra strain on the kidneys and disrupts fluid balance in the body. Poor nutrition also has a harmful effect on the digestive system. Regular consumption of fast food can cause gastritis, impaired intestinal motility, and reduced absorption of essential nutrients. The lack of dietary fiber in fast food products further contributes to constipation and other gastrointestinal



disorders. Moreover, insufficient intake of vitamins and minerals leads to hypovitaminosis, weakened immune function, frequent infections, and delayed recovery from illnesses. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to these risks. Unhealthy eating habits during growth periods can impair physical development, reduce cognitive performance, and negatively affect academic achievement. In addition, poor nutrition is associated with increased fatigue, decreased concentration, and emotional instability. In the long term, these health risks place a heavy burden on healthcare systems and society. Therefore, reducing fast food consumption and promoting healthy nutrition are essential steps in minimizing these risks and improving public health outcomes.

### **Preventive Measures**

To reduce the negative consequences of poor nutrition and fast food products, systematic and comprehensive preventive measures must be implemented. Prevention efforts should be carried out at individual, family, educational institution, and societal levels. Forming rational nutrition is the main direction of this prevention [1,22]. First, the diet must correspond to the physiological needs of the body. The energy value of the diet should be determined according to a person's age, gender, work activity, and physical activity. Disruption of energy balance, i.e., excessive calorie intake, leads to obesity and the development of metabolic syndrome [2,60]. Therefore, strict adherence to daily calorie norms is important. The balance of main nutrients in the diet is also an important preventive factor. Proteins are necessary for cell renewal and enzyme synthesis, and their deficiency leads to decreased immunity. When choosing fats, it is recommended to limit saturated and trans fats and increase the proportion of vegetable oils, as this reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases. As a source of carbohydrates, complex carbohydrate-rich grain products are preferred over quickly digestible sugars and sweet products. Limiting the consumption of fast food products is an important preventive measure. Fast food products contain high amounts of salt, sugar, food additives, and preservatives, which negatively affect gastrointestinal function. Replacing them with natural, fresh, and biologically valuable products provides the body with necessary microelements. Following a meal schedule is also an important part of healthy eating. Eating 3–4 times a day at the same time normalizes gastric juice secretion and improves the digestion process. Dinner should be light and not consist of fatty and fried foods. Eating slowly and chewing food well is also beneficial for the digestive system. It is especially important to cultivate a culture of healthy eating among children and adolescents. It is necessary to introduce educational programs on healthy eating in educational institutions and provide scientifically based explanations about the harmful effects of fast food products. Parental control over children's daily nutrition is also an important preventive measure. Combining physical activity with healthy eating plays a significant role in preventing improper nutrition. Regular physical exercise activates metabolic processes, improves blood circulation, and prevents excessive weight gain. Engaging in physical exercise at least 3–4 times a week is effective in strengthening health. Additionally, increasing the population's nutritional literacy is an important task at the state and societal levels. It is necessary to strengthen promotional work on healthy eating through mass media and develop preventive programs aimed at reducing fast food consumption [4,70]. These measures serve to improve public health in the long term.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of this study, the following scientifically based recommendations have been developed to reduce the negative consequences associated with improper nutrition and fast food products. These recommendations are appropriate to implement at individual, family, and social levels. First, it is recommended to give up or minimize regular consumption of fast food



products. Studies show that frequent consumption of such products significantly increases the risk of metabolic disorders and obesity. Therefore, it is advisable to choose homemade dishes made from natural products instead of fast food. Second, the daily diet should be rich in vitamins, minerals, and biologically active components. In particular, adequate intake of vitamins A, B group, C, and D, as well as microelements such as iron, calcium, and magnesium, is necessary for the normal functioning of the body [5,33]. Regular consumption of vegetables and fruits helps meet these needs. Third, it is recommended to limit the consumption of sugary and carbonated drinks and choose clean drinking water, green tea, or natural juices instead. Drinks high in sugar can cause the development of diabetes and dental diseases. Fourth, along with healthy eating, it is recommended to increase physical activity. Regular physical exercise activates metabolic processes, improves cardiovascular system function, and prevents excessive weight gain. It is recommended to engage in moderate physical activity for at least 150 minutes per week. Fifth, special attention should be paid to forming a culture of healthy eating among children and adolescents. Organizing educational sessions on healthy eating in educational institutions and conducting explanatory work for parents are important in preventing improper nutrition [6,91]. Sixth, to increase the population's knowledge and literacy about nutrition, it is recommended to expand social programs promoting a healthy lifestyle. Delivering scientifically based information through mass media helps reduce demand for fast food products. By consistently implementing the above recommendations, it is possible to reduce the risk of diseases related to poor nutrition and strengthen public health. In general, poor nutrition and regular consumption of fast food products have long-term negative effects on human health. Research results confirm that fast food products are a significant factor in the development of metabolic disorders, obesity, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal diseases. These problems can be prevented by adhering to the principles of healthy eating, improving food culture, and strengthening preventive measures. Therefore, the issue of healthy eating is not only a medical but also a social matter.

## Results

The research results showed that regular consumption of fast food products leads to disruptions in fat metabolism and causes excessive body weight gain. Obesity increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes mellitus [7,51]. Additionally, poor nutrition results in deficiencies of vitamins A, B group, C, and D, which leads to decreased immunity. Studies indicate that among children and adolescents, gastritis, impaired intestinal function, and general weakness are associated with poor nutrition

## Discussion

The obtained results are consistent with previous scientific studies. According to experts, balanced nutrition ensures normal growth and development of the body [8,14]. Limiting fast food products and consuming more natural food products is an effective preventive measure to avoid diseases. Deficiencies in vitamins and minerals negatively affect not only physical but also mental activity.

## Conclusion

This scientific article thoroughly analyzed the negative impact of poor nutrition and fast food products on human health. The reviewed scientific literature and existing research results show that regular consumption of high-calorie foods rich in fats and sugars leads to metabolic process disorders, excessive body weight, and obesity development. Analyses revealed that trans fats, salt, and food additives in fast food products are significant risk factors for cardiovascular



diseases, arterial hypertension, and gastrointestinal system dysfunction. Moreover, poor nutrition can cause vitamin and mineral deficiencies, decreased immunity, and reduced work capacity. The research results once again confirmed the importance of healthy and rational nutrition in disease prevention. Balanced distribution of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates, adherence to dietary regimes, and preference for natural products are important factors in strengthening health. The combination of healthy eating and physical activity significantly reduces the risk of metabolic syndrome and chronic diseases. In summary, poor nutrition is one of the pressing problems of modern society, and its prevention should be carried out at individual, family, and societal levels. Raising public food culture, limiting fast food consumption, and widely promoting a healthy lifestyle serve to improve public health in the long term. The results of this article can serve as an important theoretical basis for future in-depth studies of problems related to poor nutrition, development of preventive programs, and promotion of healthy eating through scientific and practical research.

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