



## **The outcomes of food consumption in our society**

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Food consumption is defined as the “renewed supply of all the substances necessary to preserve life; sustenance”. It is considered a process through which we have the possibility of acquiring food and nutrients to provide opportunities for growth, reproduction and maintenance of vital functions. It is known that it is a skill that can be improved throughout life and that is strongly linked to the socioeconomic, political, environmental, emotional, physical and health contexts of individuals and populations.

Each society has its own food consumption characteristics inherent to its culture and development scenarios. However, changes in the world population's lifestyles in recent decades (industrialization, changes in work and housing, land occupation, etc.) have intensely contributed to the spread of western eating habits, relative globalization of ways of eating and an increase in the degree of industrial food processing that goes to the individuals' table.

These changes led to a decrease in the consumption of foods classified as fresh and minimally processed (such as fruits, vegetables, rice and beans) and a strong advance in ultra-processed foods (food products made with industrial ingredients and with little or no fresh foods, or minimally processed, such as instant noodles, soft drinks, packaged snacks, among others). The impact on individuals' health is evident with a considerable increase in the occurrence of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and other chronic diseases.

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Besides several factors, the advance of ultra-processed products is associated with the search for practicality (frequently ready-to-eat products), excess palatability (due to the rich composition of sugars, fats and/or sodium), devaluation of food and regional food, mistaken advertisements showing that those are nutritionally balanced products due to the addition or fortification of nutrients, strong marketing strategies, and the food industries' relentless pursuit of profit.

In addition to the damage to the health of the population, this scenario (marked by greater offer and high consumption of ultra-processed products) causes damage to the environment in which we live in and it has been the focus of studies aimed at food safety and sustainability.

Food is one of the main factors related to the cause and possibilities of interventions in the current global syndemic, which includes the synergy of the pandemics of obesity, malnutrition and climate change. Last year, the addition of another pandemic to this picture, the COVID-19 pandemic, has accelerated the food insecurity scenario that was already marching towards the involvement of millions of families in the world.

Thus, in the field of food, we have the current concern with a double burden of diseases (caused by the concomitant excess of products and food shortages) and the need for actions that guide the improvement of the health of populations. Efforts must be made to increase access to fresh and minimally processed foods, with policies to subsidize the countryside, reduce the use of pesticides and strengthen family farming, as well as to fight for the approval of regulatory measures to improve food labeling and taxation of unhealthy foods; to encourage actions to value food at the expense of the strong reductionist appeal to care directed exclusively with nutrients; to promote more investments in scientific researches in the area of food and nutrition. The nutrition of a society can mirror its beautiful culture and reflect the population's health! May we understand our role in this cause and value our daily food...