

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Unhealthy Diets Linked to 20% of Deaths Worldwide”

In 2017, eleven million deaths worldwide in 2017 were linked to people eating poor diets high in sugar, salt, and processed meat that contributed to heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Of the 11 million in 2017, almost 10 million were from cardiovascular diseases, around 913,000 from cancer, and almost 339,000 from type 2 diabetes. Researchers found that among 195 countries studied, the proportion of diet-related deaths was highest in Uzbekistan and lowest in Israel. The United States ranked 43rd, while Britain was 23rd, China 140th and India 118th. Consumption of healthier foods such as nuts and seeds, milk, and whole grains was on average too low, and people consumed too many sugary drinks and too much processed meat and salt. Experts say this affirms what many have thought for several years. Chris Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, said, "Poor diet is responsible for more deaths than any other risk factor in the world. Our assessment suggests the leading dietary risk factors are high intake of sodium, or low intake of healthy foods, such as whole grains, fruit, nuts and seeds, and vegetables." People ate only 12% of the recommended amount of nuts and seeds—an average intake of 3 grams a day, compared with the recommended 21 grams—and drank more than 10 times the recommended amount of sugary drinks. Diets high in sugar, salt, and bad fats are known risk factors for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and many types of cancer. A study published in January suggested an "ideal diet" for the health of people and the planet would include a doubling of consumption of nuts, fruits, vegetables, and legumes, and a halving of meat and sugar intake. Unhealthy diet causes one in seven deaths in Britain every year and research found lack of fruit and fiber is taking the heaviest toll, fueling conditions such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes. A study by the University of Washington identified lack of wholegrain, nuts and fruits as the worst elements of the British diet. Too much salt was the fourth biggest dietary risk factor, followed by too little vegetables. And the study found that fizzy drinks and processed meats such as ham and bacon were only minor contributors to Britain's death toll. In Britain, bad eating habits cost almost as many lives as smoking. Poor diet is responsible for more deaths than any other risk factor in the world.

In the America that I love, there is no miracle diet but there are lots of bad diets that we are regularly exposed to. Always avoid extreme or fad diets, emphasize fresh fruits and vegetables in moderate portions and exercise regularly.

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