

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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## “Six Foods To Eat At Your Own Risk”

Moderation and variety with any food is the key to healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. However, there are some foods to intentionally avoid at all costs. Certain foods that are unhealthy and it's not always obvious which ones they are. So, here are six that need recognition. **1) Doughnuts.** Some claim doughnuts are not intended for human consumption. One single glazed doughnut from Dunkin' Donuts packs a whopping 14 g of fat, which equals 22% of your recommended daily intake (RDA). Unbelievably, it would take the average person 70 minutes of walking at 3 miles per hour to burn off one glazed doughnut. **2) Processed deli meats.** Preservatives are the main difference in processed versus unprocessed meats, with sodium levels being about 400 times higher in processed meats. Too much sodium is bad for you. Researchers of a meta-analysis found a moderate positive correlation between processed meat consumption and mortality—not only from cardiovascular disease but cancer as well. Consumption of unprocessed red meat was not significantly linked to total or cause-specific mortality but there are better options available such as fish, nuts, legumes, fruits, and veggies. Of note, similar negative effects were not observed with poultry. **3) Raw oysters.** Oysters are bivalve filter feeders that munch on ocean sediment but many love to eat them, including myself. The 2011 economic value of US commercial bivalve mollusk harvesting was \$1 billion per year, totaling 153.6 million lbs. Oysters are filled with bacteria and viruses. In most people, these pathogens can result in vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps that may last a few days. And the *Vibrio vulnificus* bacteria found in oysters can lead to sepsis, shock, and death. Cooking oysters does not necessarily kill all the bacteria and viruses that they contain. **4) Sugar-sweetened fruit juices.** Sugar-sweetened fruit juice is just as unhealthy as other sugar-sweetened beverages. Intake of each additional 12-ounce serving per day of sugary beverages was linked to an 11% higher all-cause mortality risk. Furthermore, intake of each additional 12-ounce serving per day was linked to a 24% heightened risk of all-cause mortality. **5) Ramen noodles.** Cheap, easy to prepare, and delicious, Ramen noodles are a favorite of many. But they're really bad for you and are linked to weight gain, metabolic syndrome, digestive tract stress, possible liver damage and risk of heart failure. **6) Movie theater popcorn.** A large tub of popcorn at Regal Cinemas, includes 20 cups of popcorn and has 1,200 calories, 980 mg sodium, and 60 g saturated fat. And that's without any additional butter topping!

In the America that I love, we realize that over consumption gets us into trouble. Remember that unprocessed red meats are neutral for heart disease risk.

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