

# Research Rundown

## Article:

## The Healthfulness of the US Packaged Food and Beverage Supply: A Cross-Sectional Study

### What did this study examine?

This study nutritionally profiled the United States (US) packaged food and beverage supply via cross sectional assessment. By focusing on the nutritional composition of US packaged foods, this study provided insight on how US foods compare to the food and beverage supply globally.


To determine "healthfulness" researchers analyzed over 300,000 food products and collected data on calories, total fat, saturated fat, total sugar, sodium, and "not a significant source" statements.

### How was the "healthfulness" of the researched food products analyzed?


Data was obtained through *Label Insight's Open Data* database, which represents >80% of all food and beverage products sold in the US over the past three years. "Healthfulness" and "level of processing", measured by the Health Star Rating (HSR) system and the NOVA classification framework, respectively, were compared across food product categories and leading manufacturers.

## Key findings:

US packaged foods have a higher proportion of ultra-processed foods. (70.9% ultra-processed in US vs 60.5% highly-processed in Australia) When compared to scratch-cooked meals, US ultra-processed food and beverage items have a...

  
**Higher**

- Median saturated fat content

  
**Lower**

- Proportion of highly processed foods
- Median total sugar content
- Higher sodium content

**The prevalence of ultra-processed foods in western countries, such as the US, causes concern due to the rising rates of chronic disease and obesity levels.**

## Put it into practice!

- Whenever possible, aim towards providing scratch-cooked meal items instead of processed packaged items to your participants.
  - Try incorporating preparation practices that can eventually lead to scratch-cooking such as: adding herbs and spices to foods, cutting fresh fruits and vegetables before serving to students, or finding recipes for your own sauces and condiments - these are all small wins that can make a huge difference!
- Focus on serving items with the least amount of processing to provide the best possible nutrition; semi-convenience items that contain both processed and non-processed components are a great way to start!

## Reference:

Baldrige AS, Huffman MD, Taylor F, Xavier D, Bright B, Van Horn LV, Neal B, Dunford E. The Healthfulness of the US Packaged Food and Beverage Supply: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Nutrients*. 2019; 11(8):1704. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu11081704>



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