

## The Nova food classification system

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Nova classifies all foods and food products according to the extent and purpose of the industrial processing they undergo, into four groups: unprocessed or minimally processed foods, processed culinary ingredients, processed foods, and ultra-processed foods. Studies based on Nova show that ultra-processed foods now dominate the food supplies of various countries. The recommendation to prefer unprocessed/minimally processed foods and freshly made meals instead of ultra-processed foods is being increasingly adopted in new official dietary guidelines issued by national governments and international health associations. This recommendation is supported by systematic reviews and meta-analyses of nationally representative dietary surveys and long-term cohort studies. These data show that increased intake of ultra-processed foods is associated with poor-quality diets and with increased morbidity and mortality from several chronic diseases. Various attributes of ultra-processed foods acting through known, plausible or suggested physiological and behavioral mechanisms relate them to ill-health, and it is likely that different combinations of attributes and mechanisms affect different health outcomes. Although more research should be done to identify these mechanisms, existing evidence is sufficient to recommend the avoidance of ultra-processed foods to optimize health, and policies to support and make feasible this recommendation.