Which Ultra-Processed Foods are the Worst for our Health? (NEW STUDY) Transcript

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Study Overview and Cohort Details

Here we have yet another study suggesting that not all ultra-processed foods are necessarily harmful. The study included over 114,000 participants from the Harvard Nurses Health Study and Health Professionals Follow-Up Study, who were followed from as early as 1976. And during the follow-up time, diet, lifestyle, and health information has been collected every two to four years.

Overall Ultra-Processed Food Risk Findings

They found that those consuming the most ultra-processed foods had a 4% higher risk of total mortality, an 8% percent higher of neurodegenerative mortality and a 9% of dying due to causes that weren't cardiovascular disease, cancer, neuro-degeneral disease or respiratory diseases.

But where things get interesting is when they split the ultra processed foods into sub-categories. The risks appear to largely be driven by sweetened drinks like Coca-Cola and meat, poultry or seafood based products which include processed meats like sausages.

Risk Driven by Sugary Drinks and Processed Meats

In fact, the sweetened drinks were associated with a higher risk of neurodegenerative mortality, between other categories of ultra-processed foods and certain outcomes, none of them appear to increase risk almost across the board like the drinks and the meat products.

And this isn't the first time we've seen this.

Broader Evidence and Nuanced Takeaway

When paired with studies looking at other health outcomes like liver diseases or type 2 diabetes, it's becoming more and more clear that it is the sugary drinks or processed meats that are the biggest problems here, while other ultra processed foods like certain breakfast cereals can actually be quite beneficial.