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## **COGNITIVE DECLINE LINKED TO ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS**

*Research Reveals Need for Healthy Changes in 2023*

**MILWAUKEE, WI, JAN. 4, 2023** – For many Americans, ushering in the new year means developing a list of resolutions. Becoming a healthier eater is one of the resolutions most frequently seen at the top of the list, and for a very sound, evidence-based reason. Ultra-processed foods make up more than half of American’s diets. Research presented at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference in 2022 suggests that eating ultra-processed foods for more than 20% of your daily calorie intake every day could set you on the road to cognitive decline.

“Research continues to show that what we eat can impact our brain health as we age,” said Kate Kahles, Program Manager, Alzheimer’s Association. “At the same time, there has been an increase in the availability and consumption of fast, processed and ultra-processed foods. There are steps we can take to good care of our brain health, including a heart-healthy, balanced diet low in some of the ingredients often found in processed foods like saturated fat, refined grains, and sugar, and high in fiber, protein, and healthy fats, often found in vegetables and fruits.”

Ultra-processed foods (UPFs) are foods that undergo significant industrial processes and contain large quantities of fats, sugar, salt, artificial flavors, colors, stabilizers, and preservatives. Examples include sodas, sugary breakfast cereals, white bread, potato chips, and frozen foods, such as, pizza, ice cream, hamburgers, and fries.

In the study, scientists at the University of São Paulo, examined the diets and cognitive function test results of more than 8,000 adults in Brazil over 8 years. Research found that people who consume the highest amount of UPF (more than 20% of daily caloric intake) have a 28% faster decline in global cognitive scores – including memory, verbal fluency, and executive function.

“I’m not suggesting you have to skip those favorite Super Bowl snacks completely,” Kahles said. “It’s about balance and about adding in more fresh foods, and less of foods containing saturated fat, refined grains, and sugar, which ultimately will benefit brain health. There are a lot of practical ways to modify our diets. Maybe add a few more carrots to the snack table and a few less potato chips and cheese. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

**MORE**

The Alzheimer's Association is committed to advancing research in the important area of UPF and cognitive decline through the U.S. Pointer research.

**About U.S. Pointer**

The Alzheimer's Association U.S. Study to Protect Brain Health Through Lifestyle Intervention to Reduce Risk (U.S. POINTER) is a two-year clinical trial to evaluate whether lifestyle interventions that simultaneously target many risk factors protect cognitive function in older adults who are at increased risk for cognitive decline. U.S. POINTER is the first such study to be conducted in a large group of Americans across the United States.

**About the Alzheimer's Association®**

The Alzheimer's Association is a worldwide voluntary health organization dedicated to Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to lead the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia®. To learn more about Alzheimer's disease and other dementia and find local support services and resources, visit [alz.org/wi](http://alz.org/wi).

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