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WHAT ARE WE FEEDING OUR CHILDREN?

Our children are getting heavier around the world. In the UK, 21% of children are overweight when they leave primary school. Being overweight is linked to many health problems.

So what happened - How did we get here?

Over the last forty years, we've been eating a new type of food. Ultra processed food - and it has been taking over our shopping trolleys! It's cheap, it's convenient, and it tastes great - so great that we could be getting addicted to it.

What is ultra- processed food?

Any food product in a tin or packet that has five or more ingredients. It will have gone through a series of processes and will contain ingredients that we don't use ourselves in home cooking.

Examples are: Chicken nuggets, pizzas, frozen chips, cereals, cheese strings, sweetened and flavoured yogurts, ready meals and desserts, biscuits, packaged cakes and some super market breads.

We are surrounded by these foods, and in the UK, two out of every three calories eaten by kids and teenagers come from ultra-processed foods.

So what's the problem?

We know that eating too much ultra-processed foods can cause us to eat more food, and this can cause overweight.

An early experiment has been done with a diet that was made up of 80% of these foods for four weeks, and the health effects were quite shocking. They included weight gain, increase in body mass index, increase in hunger hormones, decrease in hormones that tell you when you are full and most importantly, damage to brain health.

Good to watch with your older children, this documentary features Dr Chris Van Tulleken (of Operation Ouch fame) during the experiment with the diet switch. He asks the question: "what are we feeding our kids?"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000wgcd/what-are-we-feeding-our-kids>

How much ultra- processed food does your family eat? Try watching the documentary together and talk about it. How do you feel about what you eat? Are there any changes you can make?

Healthy food often costs more than ultra-processed, and it can be confusing knowing what's healthy and what's not. It's easier to just try to focus on eating REAL FOOD

Here are some swaps you could consider for your family:

Instead ofTry

Boxed breakfast cereal / Oat porridge with fruit and honey

Powdered milk shake mix / fruit and milk with a couple of dates blended with milk. Try banana or frozen berries.
Cocoa powder works well for chocolate flavour

Cheese strings / chunks of cheddar cheese

Sweet yogurt / Yogurt with honey and fruit

Mini Pizza / Pitta bread with tomato puree and grated cheese. Bake until golden.

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