# Study Links High Ultra-Processed Food Consumption in Young Children to Poor Heart Health and Diabetes Risk



A recent study published in JAMA Network Open reveals that children aged three to six who consume high amounts of ultra-processed foods (UPFs) show early signs of poor heart health and diabetes risk factors. Conducted by Spanish researchers, the study analyzed the health metrics and dietary habits of nearly 1,500 children across seven Spanish cities.

The study found that children most heavily consuming UPFs—foods high in sugar, salt, fat, and additives—had higher body-mass-index (BMI) scores, larger waist circumferences, greater fat levels, and higher blood sugar levels. These measurements are known risk factors for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Additionally, these children exhibited lower levels of HDL cholesterol, commonly referred to as "good" cholesterol.

While the study is observational and does not definitively link UPFs to these health issues, researchers noted the plausibility of such an association due to the nutrient composition of UPFs. The study also highlighted that mothers of these children were typically younger, had higher BMIs, and lower levels of education and employment, which may influence dietary choices.

The findings suggest a potential public health concern, emphasizing the need for healthier dietary patterns from early childhood.