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10 Processed Foods to Never Feed Your Kids

It may be easy to reach for one of these foods when your child is hungry, but have you ever really thought about what's inside those processed convenience foods targeted at kids? Flip those colorful cartooned packages over and you'll find almost as many artificial colors lurking in the ingredients. That list of ingredients is a long and confusing jumble of chemicals and carcinogens, like what you'll find in these 10 cancer causing foods. Let's take a closer look at what effects these foods are having on your child's health, along with alternative choices you can make to safeguard their future.

Disclosure: Bookieboo LLC has an affiliate relationship with Thrive Market and works with a large number of brands in the organic and natural foods sector, including Stonyfield, Organic Valley, Nature's Path, and Applegate.

1. PEPPERIDGE FARM'S GOLDFISH

These fishies are a pantry staple in many homes with kids. I admit, I grew up on them myself.

They appear healthy with a label that totes whole grain, real cheddar, and no artificial preservatives. However, a look at the ingredient list shows just why these unnaturally orange snack crackers should stay off of your child's plate.

Enriched wheat flour might sound good, but it means so many natural nutrients were stripped away in the processed flour that things have to be added back in. The iron added is a metallic form that our bodies just can't absorb fully. As for the folic acid, research now shows that the fortification of foods with folic acid is linked to cancer.

Moving on to the cheddar cheese—it's not organic. That means the cows ate a diet of genetically modified grains and then produced milk for the cheese. We've already discussed the dangers of GMOs and the importance of organic dairy. Conventional dairy may also contain rbST, another Monsanto product. The cows are injected with this genetically engineered hormone to stimulate milk production. It's already banned in Canada, Europe, New Zealand, and Australia. The use of rbST, in turn, causes other health problems, such as mastitis, that need further treatment with antibiotics. This increases antibiotic resistance, a dangerous problem which is then passed on to humans. These are all reasons enough to flush these fish, and this is only the third ingredient. That cheese also contains annatto as a coloring agent. Although it's from a natural source, the seeds of the achiote bush, annatto has been linked to irritable bowel syndrome.

Finally, the vegetable oils. Unlike olive or coconut oils that are extracted from pressing, vegetable oils are made in a very unnatural way. The oils are heated to unsafe temperatures, oxidized and then treated with petroleum solvents. Then the oil is treated with chemicals to make the color and odor of the oil more pleasant. On top of that, they are also made from GMO crops like corn and soy.

BETTER ALTERNATIVE- ANNIE'S ORGANIC CHEDDAR BUNNIES

These certified organic and Non-GMO project verified snacks are an easy swap out to the familiar fish. Annie's Organic Cheddar Bunnies do contain organic annatto extract. Annatto is actually found in most crackers, but you won't find any of the other ingredients of concern above.

BEST ALTERNATIVE- MARY'S GONE CRACKERS

One of my favorite crackers, these are free of all the ingredients to avoid listed above. They too are certified organic and Non-GMO project verified. Mary's Gone Crackers are made from organic brown rice, quinoa, and seeds, so they are also gluten free.

2. KELLOGG'S POP-TARTS

"Baked with real fruit" catches your eye on the front of the package, but turn it over and you'll see a different story. The filling is about 10% fruit. So what's in the other 90%? More enriched flour, soybean and palm oil, GMO after GMO, artificial colors, and so much sugar!

These processed pastries have dextrose, sugar, and both corn syrup and high fructose corn syrup. All made with GMOs, like the goldfish above. If you see "sugar" on the label, it comes from genetically modified sugar beets, not cane sugar like you may think. Refined sugars spike insulin levels and feed cancer cells.

Even that "real fruit" is still a cause for concern. The dried apples, strawberries and pear are sprayed with pesticides. In fact, apples are the most contaminated item on the EWG's dirty dozen list.

A common ingredient in food's marketed towards kids are artificial colors. Bright and fun looking colors are actually toxic chemicals that cause hyperactivity in children and allergies. This particular flavor of pop-tart contains Red 40, Yellow 6, and Blue 1. Yellow 6 might sound familiar, as it's the dye that many petitioned to remove from cheddar cheese. The toxins in these dyes are known to cause cancer, hyperactivity in children, asthma, skin rashes, migraines and even learning ability. Most are already banned in other countries too. Carmine color, which has shown to harm blue virginity and even cause kidney failure in some cases, is also used in some foods.



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Although this label doesn't list monosodium glutamate, also known as MSG, it does list gelatin. This is used in the icing of the product and commonly contains MSG. This is linked to obesity, intestinal issues, migraines, skin rashes and brain damage.

BETTER ALTERNATIVE- NATURE'S PATH FROSTED MAPLE BROWN SUGAR TOASTER PASTRIES

These breakfast pastries won't contain any GMOs or persistent pesticides. Nature's Path Frosted Maple Toaster Pastries are certified organic and Non-GMO project verified as well. They are also trans fat free. Although you will find caramel color, it's organic class I. It's the only caramel color that can be certified organic, and is minimally processed with limited additional ingredients.

BEST ALTERNATIVE- HOMEMADE

This may not be as quick of an option, but it's the best one to avoid artificial colors. These Whole-Wheat Toaster Pastries pictured are from 100 Days of



Real Food. Be sure to use only organic ingredients. You can make them ahead in a large batch and freeze for convenience. If that's still more work than you want, opt for some organic toast and jam.

3. NESTLE NESQUIK CHOCOLATE MILK

Seemingly a healthier choice than soda and energy drinks, this is a deceptive beverage. It's even a staple in school lunches. Aside from the aforementioned dangers of conventional dairy, this Nesquik is loaded with sugar. One bottle (listed as two servings) has a whopping 48 grams! Even if a child were to only consume half the bottle, that's still double the recommended daily amount of 12 grams (3 teaspoons) of sugar. Research shows Excess sugar consumption leads to heart disease, diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, obesity, liver problems, and reduced brain power. Natural and artificial flavors are towards the end of the ingredient list in this Nestle Nesquik Chocolate Milk. Don't be fooled by the term "natural" because it has little bearing on if something is healthy. As for artificial flavors, they can contain hundreds of chemicals with side effects ranging from allergies to behavioral issues in children.

Carrageenan is a thickening agent used in many types and brands of milk. It has recently become controversial because studies on animals have shown gastrointestinal inflammation, intestinal lesions, ulcers, and malignant tumors. If you see carrageenan on the label, it's also a possibility that it contains MSG.

BETTER ALTERNATIVE- ORGANIC VALLEY CHOCOLATE MILK

Not only is this milk certified organic, it's also fair trade. In the refrigerated version you'll find no carrageenan or artificial colors and flavors. It is still a chocolate milk, so there is a high amount of sugar in this beverage. It's easier to limit serving size with Organic Valley Chocolate Milk because it isn't in a single serving size container. You can also cut it with plain milk.

BEST ALTERNATIVE- HOMEMADE ORGANIC STRAWBERRY MILK

Of course, plain organic milk is the best alternative, but if your child still wants a sweeter, more flavorful option try this. Simply blend up a few organic strawberries into the milk for a sweet and subtle flavor addition.

4. SODA

Just like the chocolate milk above, soda is loaded with sugar. However, most kids will probably only have one Nesquik, but then have multiple sodas. Luckily many schools and fast food chains have eliminated soda from the children's menu. It's one of the cancer causing foods that should be eliminated from your diet.

The coloring of soda is toxic as well. Caramel color, like in our strawberry pop-tart, is a carcinogen. Choosing an orange soda instead of a brown cola isn't any better. You'll see this Fanta has both Yellow 6 and Red 40 on it's ingredient list. The vague "natural" flavors isn't reassuring either. It's more of the same offenders as the processed foods we've already revealed.

BETTER ALTERNATIVE-LIVE KOMBUCHA SODA

These sodas come in a variety of familiar flavors, but they are made with raw, organic kombucha. Not only do you avoid the nasty colors, flavors, and carcinogens in soda, this option aids in digestion. Kombucha is made from fermented tea, so it's not recommended for children under 4, although Live Kombucha Soda says their fermentation process does not allow the kombucha to become alcoholic.

BEST ALTERNATIVE- SKIP THE SODA

It may seem obvious, but stick with water or milk for the healthiest options. You can add fruit to water to infuse it with flavor if your child wants something different.

5. FAST FOOD KIDS MEALS

The majority of kid's meals are made up of a hamburger and fries, which we have already identified as cancer causing foods. Burger King still offers soda with their kids meal, even though other chains have eliminated it. Have you seen the ingredient list in these meals? A cheeseburger contains 70 ingredients! That Happy Meal being marketed to your child is not something you should be happy about. To go line by line with every ingredient in a Happy Meal would take a long time, but you can review all of their ingredients on their website. What I found in my research was non-organic meat, dairy, fruits, and vegetables. All of these items contain harmful GMOs and pesticides. In a typical Happy Meal you will find 540 calories, 18 grams of fat, 0.5 gram of trans fat, 790 mg of sodium, and 32 grams of sugar.

What about skipping the burger and fries and choosing chicken? Well Chick-fil-A's chicken contains MSG in their seasoning and breading. It's also filled with GMOs, pesticides, and enriched flour, like nearly all of the foods on our list so far. McDonald's Chicken McNuggets also contain the same things, although they don't just come right out and say MSG. The natural flavors and seasoning are common ingredients where hidden MSG lies.

BETTER ALTERNATIVE- CHIPOTLE

This fast food chain's motto is "food with integrity" and they are working to stand by this. Although their full menu is not organic or GMO free yet, they do have a detailed ingredient list which labels what items on their menu are organic or contain GMOs.

BEST ALTERNATIVE- SKIP THE FAST FOOD

It may seem obvious, but because over 80% of the commercial feed for animals is GMO, it's difficult to eat out and avoid GMOs. Fast food is usually higher in fat, calories, and sodium than food prepared in our homes. You have complete control over what foods go into your home cooking, unlike what is prepared at a fast food chain.

6. YOPLAIT GO-GURT

These yogurt tubes may seem like a healthier snack option when it comes to processed foods. A look at the ingredients shows the typical culprit of conventional dairy. Animal products are the first products you should be buying organic. Along with the genetically modified dairy you'll find modified corn starch, which is also GMO. Go-Gurt also contains 2/3 of the daily recommended amount of sugar for children in just one tube. The thickener carrageenan, shown to cause intestinal problems in animals, is also used.

An ingredient we haven't yet discussed is potassium sorbate. This preservative can cause allergic reactions, nausea, diarrhea, and even DNA damage. The convenience of a squeezable yogurt isn't really worth all of those risks.

BETTER ALTERNATIVE- STONYFIELD YOKIDS POUCHES

These yogurt squeeze pouches are an organic alternative to the above version. Since the dairy cows are fed an all organic diet, you don't have to worry about contamination from harmful pesticides and GMOs. Another thing you won't worry about with Stonyfield YoKids Pouches is artificial flavors or the preservative potassium sorbate. Flavored yogurts do have higher levels of sugar than their plain counterparts.

BEST ALTERNATIVE- STONYFIELD GREEK PLAIN YOGURT

This is yogurt at it's purest and finest. It's certified organic, high in protein, and low in sugar in relation to other yogurts. It might not be as exciting as squeezable flavored yogurt, but you can add excitement. Try blending it with fresh organic fruit to add sweetness and flavor. You can even freeze the blended mixture to create a healthy greek yogurt popsicle.

7. KID CUISINE

You've seen these frozen tv dinners at the grocery store. They're adored with cartoon characters and bright colors to catch your kids' eye. After looking at the long list of ingredients on the package, I found a number of concerning components to this meal. Almost too many to name. Everything you see on the front of the package is GMO—all of it!

You'll find trans fats in the mono- and diglycerides and partially hydrogenated vegetable oil. The package isn't the only place you'll find colors either. This Kid Cuisine has Red 40, Yellow 6, Blue 1, and Blue 2 Lake, and annatto. There is also MSG hidden in the whey protein concentrate, spice blend, natural flavors, soy protein concentrate, and carrageenan.

It might save some time to make this microwave meal, but it will cause more headaches than cooking—literally. In addition to headaches, it can also cause nausea, allergies, hyperactivity, chest pains, heart palpitations, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and more.

BEST ALTERNATIVE- HOMEMADE

TV dinners just aren't an easy thing to find when it comes to healthier eating. You can find organic components though. Applegate offers organic chicken strips, pair those with a side of organic veggies and a fruit for dessert, you've got a meal to please.

8. KELLOGG'S FROOT LOOPS (AND OTHER CEREALS)

You may have heard that Kellogg's Froot Loops contain weedkiller. It's because of the GMO sugar, corn and soy that are prevalent in this breakfast cereal. The partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is GMO and contains trans fats, which are considered to be the worst kind of fat and are linked to serious health risks.

The unique spelling of "froot" is probably because you won't find any real fruit in this cereal. What you will find is a vibrant array of colors. Froot Loops also has 6 artificial and natural colors on the ingredients list. So by starting your child's day with a bowl full of colored cereal, you're setting them up for hyperactivity and increased ADD or ADHD symptoms for the day.

BEST ALTERNATIVE- ENVIROKIDZ CEREAL

These all organic cereals come in a variety of flavors to keep your child and his or her tastebuds happy. The ingredients list for their Gorilla Munch cereal is comprised of just 3 ingredients. You won't find GMOs or artificial colors in this option.

9. HOSTESS TWINKIES

Hopefully this is not a surprise on the list. The twinkie has never really gotten a reputation as a health food. The ingredients include partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, shortening, and beef fat—all trans fats. It also has the usual offenders of enriched bleached white flour, high fructose corn syrup, dextrose, MSG, and artificial colors. That means over fortified flour, dangerous GMOS, and toxic food additives and colors.

BETTER ALTERNATIVE-ARROWHEAD MILLS ORGANIC VANILLA CAKE

If you have a child with a sweet tooth and need a twinkie alternative, try this cake mix from Arrowhead Mills. I recommend swapping the eggs and oil for organic applesauce to get a moist cake with fewer calories and fat. Bake into cupcakes and top with fresh organic whipped cream for more of a twinkie flavor.

BEST ALTERNATIVE- SKIP THE CAKES

Dessert doesn't have to be part of every meal, but if your child wants something sweet, opt for organic fruit instead. It's the ultimate convenience food, perfectly prepared by nature. The best part is, it only has one ingredient.

10. KRAFT OSCAR MEYER LUNCHABLES

There is a wide array of Lunchables products at the grocery store. These meals are made to save time when packing a lunch for your child. A closer look at the ingredients and you'll see a long list of reasons to steer clear of this processed lunch pack. It's counter productive to your kids' school day to send them off with this in their bag. The artificial coloring and flavors elicit behavioral reactions and a difficulty in staying focused.

It's so processed that even the cheese isn't really cheese, but rather a "cheese product." You'll find GMOs, trans fat, and even nitrites. These are potentially cancerous and can elicit an allergic reaction.

BEST ALTERNATIVE-HOMEMADE

There isn't an all organic alternative to Lunchables yet, though Applegate's Half Time meals are a huge step in the right direction. I've easily cut squares of organic lunch meat and cheese and packed them up in a food container with some organic crackers. It might take 5 minutes more, but it will save you the trouble of those nasty side-effect from the Lunchables ingredients.

Next time you're off to the grocery store, be sure to cross these foods off the list for good. Opt for homemade foods, organic options, and foods without the colors, additives, and chemicals mentioned above. You can find more tips on how to feed your children a healthy lunch here.

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