

Ultra-processed foods triples high BP: Study

ICMR-NIN study finds young adults more prone to heart risks

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Biscuits, instant foods, sugary drinks and packaged snacks are becoming a routine part of urban student life, but a new study in Hyderabad has found that frequent consumption of such ultra-processed foods may already be affecting the health of young adults' hearts.

Scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN) found that college students with higher intake of ultra-processed foods rich in fat and salt had nearly three times higher odds of elevated blood pressure compared to those with lower intake.

The study, recently published in the journal 'Nutrients', examined dietary habits and blood pressure profiles of 311 undergraduate students aged 18 to 24



12.5%

participants had elevated blood pressure levels of 140/90 mmHg or more.

BAD FOOD

A study by the National Institute of Nutrition presents alarming data

COMMONLY consumed ultra-processed foods identified in the study included biscuits, chocolates, packaged savoury snacks, bread products, sugary beverages and instant foods.

TASTE, convenience, affordability and easy availability were found to be the main reasons driving consumption among students.

from colleges across Hyderabad. Researchers found that 12.5 per cent of participants already had elevated blood pressure levels of 140/90 mmHg or more, pointing to growing cardiovascular risks among urban youth.

Commonly consumed ultra-processed foods

identified in the study included biscuits, chocolates, packaged savoury snacks, bread products, sugary beverages and instant foods. Taste, convenience, affordability and easy availability were found to be the main reasons driving consumption among students.

The researchers assessed eating patterns using a structured food frequency questionnaire based on the NOVA food classification system, covering 24 commonly consumed ultra-processed foods. Blood pressure measurements were taken using standardised, validated procedures, while the analysis also accounted for factors such as age, sex, residence and family income.

Dr Bharati Kulkarni, director of ICMR-NIN, said India was witnessing a rapid nutrition transition, particularly among adolescents and young adults. "The findings from this study are an important reminder that dietary choices made early in life can significantly influence future cardiovascular health," she said, adding that healthier food environments and stronger nutrition awareness were urgently needed.