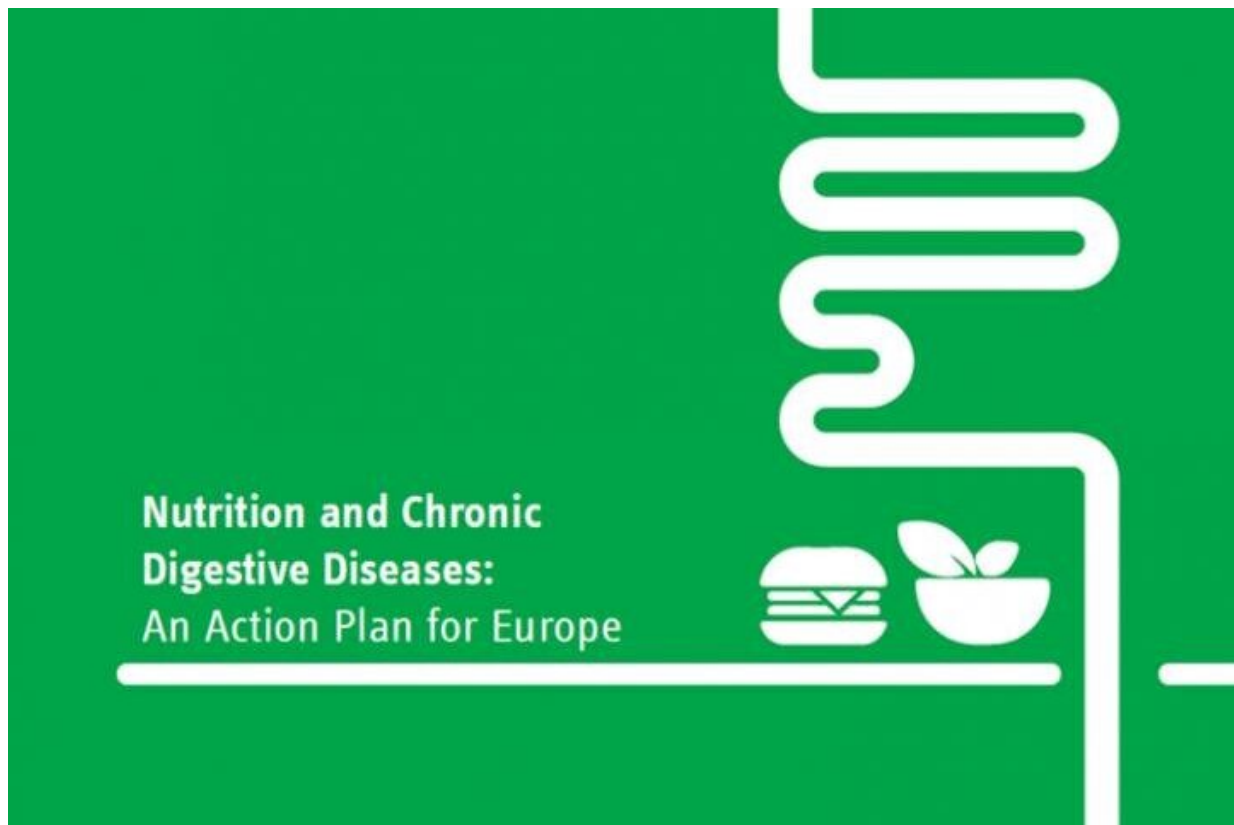


# Millions of Europeans at risk of chronic digestive diseases, new report reveals

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The report cover. Credit: UEG

Poor nutritional choices, including a high intake of ultra-processed foods and trans-fats, are putting millions of Europeans at an increased risk of a range of chronic digestive diseases, including digestive cancers, wheat

related disorders and functional GI disorders, as well as obesity, a new report shows.

Nutrition and Chronic Digestive Diseases, launched today by United European Gastroenterology (UEG) and supported by eleven medical associations, patient organisations and NGOs, canvasses the opinion of a number of leading experts in the fields of nutrition, [digestive cancers](#), liver diseases, [functional gastrointestinal disorders](#) and paediatrics.

## The Ultra-processed Food Endemic

The report outlines how ultra-processed foods, which are often high in fat, added sugar and salt, now frequently contribute to up to half of modern European energy intake and, in some countries, over 75 percent of mean energy intake.

Consumption of ultra-processed foods has dramatically increased in recent decades, with common examples including soft drinks, confectionary, crisps and frozen ready meals. Studies have shown that the consumption of ultra-processed foods is associated with an increased risk of [cancer](#) and suggest that the rapidly increasing consumption of these food types may be driving the growing cancer burden. A 10 percent increase in the proportion of ultra-processed foods in the diet, for example, is associated with a 12 percent increased overall cancer risk.

% Adult Obesity Rates in Europe (*self-report data)		
Country	Male Obesity %	Female Obesity %
Malta	36.9	31.3
Romania	29.4	34.1
Greece	27.9	25.6
England	27.4	30
Cyprus	27	28.8
Scotland	27	30
Ireland (Northern)	26	27
Ireland (Republic)	25.8	21.3
Portugal	25.5	32
Italy	24.5	24.9
Poland	24.2	23.4
Luxembourg	24.1	21
Czech Republic	23.9	22.3
Germany	23.3	23.9
Spain	22.8	20.5
Hungary*	22	20.4
Wales*	22	23
Slovenia *	21	17.4
Croatia	20.7	16.8
Finland	20.4	19
Estonia*	19.1	21.5
Latvia*	18.8	23.3
Slovakia	18.1	15.9
France	16.8	17.4
Sweden	15.5	14.4
Denmark *	14.1	15.6
Belgium	13.9	14.2
Austria	13.4	10.7
Bulgaria	13.4	19.2
Lithuania	11.3	15.2
Netherlands	10.4	10.1

The percent of adult obesity rates in Europe (\*self-report data). Credit: UEG

In addition to a raised risk of chronic diseases, high consumption of these foods also increases the prevalence of obesity. Alarmingly, over half (52 percent) of the EU's population aged 18 and over is now overweight or obese and 1 in 3 of Europe's school children are estimated to be overweight.

"Obesity, often driven by poor nutritional choices, increases the risk of a range of serious digestive health conditions and causes a significant healthcare burden, high societal costs, misery for patients and, ultimately, shortens lives," explains Professor Markus Peck, Department of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology at Klinikum Klagenfurt am Wörthersee, Austria. "Healthy balanced diets and lifestyles can help prevent chronic digestive diseases but the difficulty we face is ensuring our citizens make the right choices in following these lifestyles."

## **An Action Plan for Europe**

The report makes a number of recommendations in order to reduce the risk and impact of chronic digestive diseases, including:

- Less than 10 percent (

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