

What are the most dangerous food groups?

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Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds—we hear a lot about the "best" food groups for health. But what about the worst ones? What foods should you be eliminating or at least cutting back on?

Research published recently in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* looked at dietary intake and 318,000 deaths from diabetes, stroke and heart disease. In addition to not eating enough omega-3 rich seafood, nuts and seeds, two problematic factors stood out.

These deaths were associated with eating too much salt and too many processed meats. The two go hand-in-hand in sausages, hot dogs, corned beef, beef jerky, canned meat, meat sauces, lunch meats and bacon. Eating too much salty food was associated with nearly 10% of those deaths. Processed meats are a key source of salt, but so are snacks, prepared foods and even packaged vegetables, especially those canned in salt.

A separate study of 400,000 deaths related to heart and blood vessel diseases presented at an American Heart Association scientific meeting came to similar conclusions—finding 9% of these deaths were due to too much salt. The very unhealthy trans fats were also on the dangerous foods list. Fortunately, these are being phased out of packaged foods.

But again, what you're not eating makes a difference, too. These researchers also found that not getting enough whole grains, vegetables, and nuts and seeds was detrimental, with each missing food group being linked to between 10% and 11% of the deaths.

When planning your best diet, remember that eating healthy is a balancing act—you want to increase good foods and cut back on the bad ones to make sure that the scales tip in your favor.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [the dangers of processed foods](#).

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