

Junk food is half cost of a good diet

theday.co.uk/junk-food-is-half-cost-of-a-good-diet-4 4 February 2025



Toll: One in ten English children are obese by the time they start primary school. By the time they are in Year 6, the figure is one in every five.

Should healthy eating be a human right? A new study shows that poorer people in the UK are targeted by the companies that sell junk food.

What's happening?

Miriam wants to buy some fresh fruit and vegetables for her children's supper, but she does not have enough money to pay for them. Instead, she will have to get them **fast food**. What will it be: fried chicken, pizza or hamburgers?

New research shows that children from the poorest British families eat 20% less fruit and vegetables than those from the richest. They are almost twice as likely to be **obese**.

Find out more

To make things worse, food and drink companies are targeting the poorest people with their unhealthiest foods. Over 30% of their advertising is for sweets, snacks, puddings and soft drinks. Just 2% of it is for fruit and vegetables.

In England as a whole, a quarter of the places to buy food are takeaways. In the most **deprived** areas, a third of them are.

Diseases caused by unhealthy foods cost Britain a lot of money — including £67.5bn for the UK's health service, the **NHS**.

In response, the **government** has said it will ban junk food ads on TV before 9pm and sales of energy drinks to people under 16.

Local councils have also been told not to let fast food chains build new restaurants close to schools. But KFC has challenged these efforts 43 times.

Should healthy eating be a human right?

Some say

Yes! We need healthy food just as much as we need clean water, clean air, education and healthcare — if not more. It would also save governments lots of money if people were healthier.

Others think

No! This is not a practical idea. For millions of people around the world, just getting enough food to eat is a struggle. Meanwhile, it is all very well banning junk food — but people need to know how to cook healthy meals too.

Some people say

"Don't eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognise as food."

Michael Pollan (1955 –), American journalist

What do you think?

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Do you worry about what you eat?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Why is healthy food more expensive?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are asked if all junk food should be banned. Think about what you would say.

5. Express

What do others believe? - What is the best food you have ever eaten? Take it in turns to say.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Imagine you are offered a job as a restaurant reviewer. Review a meal you have had at home.

Glossary

Fast food - Easily-prepared processed foods.

Obese - For adults, obesity is defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or more. A BMI of 25 or more is classed as overweight.

Deprived - Not having the things that are needed for a pleasant or successful life.

NHS - The National Health Service, the publicly funded healthcare system in the UK. The NHS was founded in 1948.

Government - The group of people who govern - or lead - the country.

Local councils - Groups of people elected to govern a region, city or town within a country and organise services for it.