

Junk Food Increases Food Allergies in Children - Biotech

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Conducted on 105,151 children in Campania, the study indicates that in the last ten years food allergies have increased by about 34% and that they have tripled in children under three years of age; moreover, the comparison between children with food allergies and healthy children showed that in the former the consumption of ultra-processed foods was almost double, observes the coordinator of the research, Roberto Berni Canani, professor of Pediatrics and director of the pediatric allergology program of the Federico II University of Naples and director of the ImmunoNutrition Laboratory of Ceinge.

A non-invasive technique used for the first time in children in this study indicates that the accumulation of harmful substances found in ultra-processed foods is much greater in the tissues of children with food allergy. Experiments on human cells conducted as part of the same study indicate that "junk foods are in fact powerful inducers of food allergy as they can cause severe alterations in the intestinal barrier, inflammation and a strong allergic response," notes Berni Canani.

"The results of this study are of great importance for understanding the causes of the worrying trend in the incidence and prevalence of food allergy cases in children in the Western world," says the research coordinator. Ultra-processed foods "are high in sugar, salt, carbohydrates and hydrogenated fats and low in fiber, protein, vitamins and minerals. Their success," he continues, "depends on something else: they are good and are ready to eat immediately, at most after a quick passage in the microwave oven." A recent study conducted in the United States indicates that 67% of the calories in a child's diet come from ultra-processed foods. "It happens in the United States. But," he observes, "it is a trend that is also growing strongly in Italy."



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For Berni Canani, the results of the research "pave the way for an important, simple and inexpensive prevention strategy: drastically reduce the consumption of ultra-processed commercial foods and encourage our children's consumption of fresh foods rich in fruit, vegetables, olive oil, fish and legumes. It's best if cooked at low temperatures."

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