

ISSN 0017 - 8861

Estd 1923

Health

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO HEALTHFUL LIVING

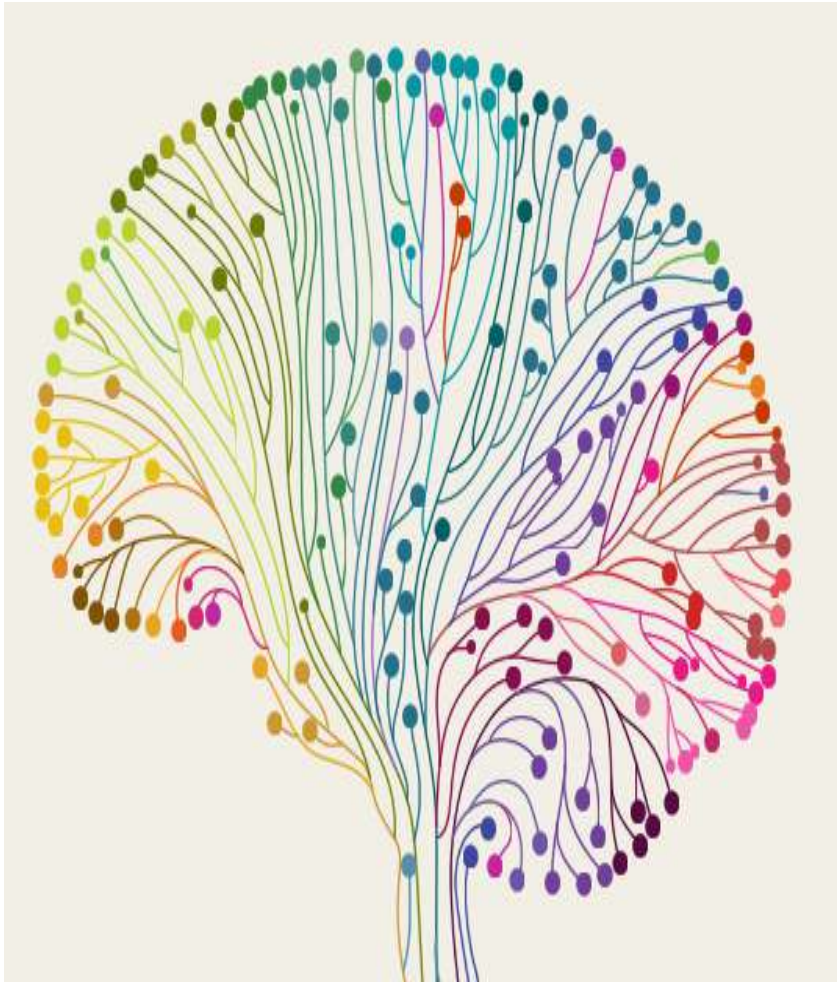
Email: admin@theantiseptic.in
subscription@theantiseptic.in

www.theantiseptic.in

Vol. 102 • No. 06

JUNE 2024

₹ 20



BISCUITS - A HEALTH THREAT ?



Biscuits is the beloved snack that accompanies tea time, fills cookie jars, and satisfies cravings. However, beneath their crispy, sugary exterior lies a hidden truth that may surprise many – biscuits can have a significant impact on your health. Biscuits are harmful for health. The question is why you should consider ditching biscuits from your diet?

The Hidden Dangers Ingredients of Your Favorite Snack- Biscuits

Several factors impact the quality of biscuits, including the quality of flour, suitable baking techniques, and the types and proportions of ingredients used. Texture plays a crucial role in determining biscuit quality. The sugars and baking

conditions affect the levels of the key reported harmful chemical compounds in cookies, such as 5-hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF), 3-deoxyglucosone (3-DG), glyoxal (GO), and methylglyoxal (MGO). Monochloro Propanediol and glycidyl esters of fatty acids are additional contaminants originating from the refined oils utilized in the production of biscuits.

Let's delve into the ingredients that go into making biscuits and their impact on our bodies:

- 1) **Refined Wheat (Maida):** Maida, or refined wheat flour, lacks nutrition and fiber due to the refining process. Bleaching agents used to whiten the flour can affect texture and appearance. Watch out for labels; "wheat flour" doesn't necessarily mean whole wheat.
- 2) **White Sugar:** Biscuits often contain refined white sugar, which can contribute to cavities, fatigue, and obesity. High-fructose corn syrup, a common sweetener, can spike blood sugar rapidly and pose health risks.

- 3) **Invert Sugar Syrup:** This sweeter alternative to sugar is added for texture and shelf life but can lead to rapid blood sugar spikes and health issues like diabetes.
- 4) **Vegetable Oils:** Hydrogenated vegetable oils used in biscuits can contain harmful trans fats, linked to heart disease and cancer. Opt for snacks made with cold-pressed oils or natural butter.
- 5) **Artificial Additives and Preservatives:** Common additives and preservatives in biscuits may build up toxins in the body over time, particularly harmful for children's developing bodies.
- 6) **MSG (Mono-sodium Glutamate):** MSG, a taste enhancer, can lead to cravings and blood sugar spikes, potentially causing health issues with prolonged consumption.
- 7) **Milk Powder:** Added for flavor and texture, powdered milk may contain oxidized cholesterol, contributing to health issues like Alzheimer's disease and obesity.
- 8) **Raising Agents:** Biscuits often contain raising agents like baking powder or soda, which can lead to digestive discomfort and may contain harmful substances like aluminum sulfate.
- 9) **Artificial Flavors and Colors:** Synthetic flavors and colors enhance taste and appearance but may not contain any real fruit or natural ingredients.
- 10) **Emulsifiers:** These compounds increase stability and shelf life but may pose cancer risks and should be consumed in moderation.
- 11) **Dough Conditioners and Improvers:** These additives improve dough texture and appearance but can add to the accumulation of toxins in the body over time.
- 12) **Chemicals used:** The leavening gases, carbon dioxide (CO₂), and ammonia (NH₃), are generated through the breakdown of sodium and ammonium bicarbonate. Alongside water vapor, these gases form bubbles within the biscuit dough. The presence of leavening agents and added salt contributes to a high ionic strength.

Side Effects of Eating Your Favorite Biscuits

1. High in Sugar and Empty Calories:

One of the most significant drawbacks of biscuits is their high sugar content. Whether it's in the form of refined sugar, syrups, or artificial sweeteners, biscuits often pack a hefty dose of sugar into each bite. Consuming excess sugar can contribute to weight gain, increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and wreak havoc on your dental health. The use of low graded sugar makes it truly unhealthy to eat. Consuming biscuits can lead to rapid spikes in blood sugar levels, prompting a swift release of insulin. However, this insulin surge may subsequently cause a rapid decline in blood sugar levels, potentially resulting in hypoglycemia.

Furthermore, many biscuits are laden with empty calories, providing little to no nutritional value beyond their sugar and fat content. This means that indulging in biscuits regularly can contribute to a diet that lacks essential vitamins, minerals, and nutrients, potentially leading to nutrient deficiencies and poor overall health.

2. Loaded with Unhealthy Fats:

Besides their sugar content, biscuits are notorious for their unhealthy fat composition, often containing significant amounts of saturated and trans fats. These fats, prevalent in ingredients like butter, margarine, and palm oil commonly used in biscuit production, can wreak havoc on our cardiovascular health.

Consuming excessive saturated and trans fats can lead to the accumulation of plaque in the arteries, a condition known as atherosclerosis. This buildup narrows the arteries, restricting blood flow and increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke. By reducing biscuit consumption and opting for healthier snack alternatives, individuals can lower their intake of these detrimental fats, thereby promoting heart health and overall well-being.

Moreover, it's essential to be aware of the specific types of fats present in biscuits. While saturated fats are primarily derived from animal sources like butter, margarine, and certain vegetable oils, trans fats are commonly found in partially hydrogenated oils used in processed foods like biscuits. Both types of fats can raise LDL (bad) cholesterol levels

and increase the risk of heart disease when consumed in excess. Therefore, choosing snacks low in saturated and trans fats is crucial for maintaining a healthy heart and reducing the risk of cardiovascular complications.

3. The World of Processed Ingredients:

Many commercially produced biscuits are made with a laundry list of processed ingredients and additives, including preservatives, artificial flavors, and colors. These additives are used to enhance taste, texture, and shelf life but may have negative effects on health in the long run.

Some additives, such as artificial sweeteners and flavorings, have been linked to adverse health outcomes, including digestive issues, allergic reactions, and even cancer in some cases. By choosing whole, minimally processed foods over biscuits, you can reduce your exposure to these potentially harmful additives and support overall wellness.

Cooking salt plays a crucial role in the culinary world, serving not only as a flavor enhancer but also as a preservative that extends the shelf life of food products. Its ability to draw out moisture and inhibit the growth of bacteria

and other microorganisms makes it an essential ingredient in food preservation methods throughout history.

However, despite its culinary importance, the excessive consumption of salt can have detrimental effects on our health. One significant concern is its association with high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. High sodium intake can lead to fluid retention in the body, increasing blood volume and putting added pressure on the walls of the arteries. Over time, this can contribute to the development of hypertension, a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular conditions.

Furthermore, salt is a common allergen for some individuals, particularly those with sensitivities or intolerances to sodium. Consuming foods high in salt can trigger allergic reactions ranging from mild symptoms like hives or itching to more severe reactions such as swelling of the throat or difficulty breathing. It's essential for individuals with salt allergies to carefully monitor their sodium intake and avoid foods with high salt content to prevent adverse reactions.

In addition to its direct impact on health, salt can also exacerbate

certain medical conditions. For example, individuals with kidney disease may be advised to limit their salt intake to prevent fluid retention and maintain optimal kidney function. Likewise, individuals with congestive heart failure or liver cirrhosis may need to restrict their sodium intake to prevent fluid buildup and complications associated with these conditions.

Overall, while cooking salt plays a vital role in food preparation and preservation, it's crucial to consume it in moderation and be mindful of its potential health implications. By incorporating other flavor-enhancing ingredients like herbs, spices, and citrus juices into our cooking and opting for low-sodium alternatives whenever possible, we can enjoy delicious meals while prioritizing our health and well-being.

4. Promotes Mindless Eating and Overconsumption:

Biscuits are frequently indulged in as snacks between meals or as convenient energy boosters throughout the day. However, their compact size and irresistible taste often lead to mindless munching, resulting in overconsumption and unnecessary calorie intake. The addictive nature of biscuits can easily lure individuals into a cycle of continuous nibbling,

disregarding hunger and satiety cues.

The act of eating biscuits mindlessly can disrupt the body's natural signals of hunger and fullness, making it challenging to discern genuine hunger from mere cravings. This disregard for internal cues can foster unhealthy eating patterns and contribute to gradual weight gain over time.

Moreover, the pervasive availability of biscuits in various settings, from office pantries to vending machines, further exacerbates the issue of mindless eating. Their easy accessibility and enticing flavor make it all too tempting to reach for another biscuit without considering the nutritional consequences.

Additionally, biscuits often lack satiating nutrients like protein and fiber, which are essential for promoting feelings of fullness and satisfaction. As a result, individuals may consume larger quantities of biscuits in an attempt to feel satiated, inadvertently consuming excess calories in the process.

To combat the pitfalls of mindless eating and overconsumption, it's essential to practice mindful eating habits. This involves being present and attentive while eating, paying attention to hunger and

fullness cues, and savoring each bite mindfully. By cultivating a mindful approach to eating and choosing nutrient-rich snacks over biscuits, individuals can regain control over their food intake and support their overall health and well-being.

5. Better Alternatives for Snacking:

While the allure of biscuits may be hard to resist, there are plenty of healthier alternatives available that can satisfy your cravings without compromising your health. Opt for snacks that are rich in nutrients, such as fresh fruit, vegetables with hummus or nut butter, Greek yogurt with berries, or homemade trail mix with nuts and seeds.

These options provide essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber while satisfying hunger and keeping energy levels stable. By incorporating more nutrient-dense snacks into your diet, you can nourish your body and support overall health while reducing your reliance on biscuits.

6. Palm Oil Predicament:

Have you ever paused to consider the prevalence of palm oil in the ingredient list of biscuits? While it undeniably imparts a delectable crispiness to these

treats, palm oil presents a host of concerning issues. This fat-based ingredient, widely utilized in biscuit manufacturing, has been implicated in heightened risk factors for cardiovascular disease, raising alarms among health-conscious consumers.

The ubiquity of palm oil in biscuits is largely attributed to its affordability and ability to enhance texture and taste. However, beneath its culinary allure lies a darker reality. Research has linked palm oil consumption to adverse effects on cardiovascular health, including elevated cholesterol levels and increased susceptibility to heart disease.

Moreover, the extensive use of palm oil in food production poses broader environmental and health concerns. The cultivation of palm oil often entails deforestation and habitat destruction, leading to biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. Furthermore, the processing of palm oil can generate harmful byproducts, contributing to air and water pollution in affected regions.

In addition to its environmental impact, palm oil consumption may compromise human health in various ways. The high concentration of saturated fats in palm oil can disrupt lipid profiles

and promote inflammation within the body, both of which are implicated in the development of cardiovascular disease.

Furthermore, palm oil consumption has been associated with decreased antioxidant activity in the body, potentially exacerbating oxidative stress and increasing the risk of chronic diseases, including heart disease, over time.

In light of these concerns, conscientious consumers are increasingly scrutinizing product labels and seeking alternatives to palm oil-laden biscuits. By advocating for sustainable sourcing practices and supporting brands committed to transparency and environmental stewardship, individuals can make informed choices that prioritize both personal health and planetary well-being.

7. Salty Situation:

A little sprinkle of salt might seem harmless, but when it comes to biscuits, it's easy to exceed your recommended daily intake without even realizing it. According to the Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH), sweet biscuits can contain a surprising amount of salt per serving. Consuming

excess salt can elevate your risk of high blood pressure, stroke, and heart failure. Not to mention, it can lead to water retention, causing bloating, puffiness, and unwanted weight gain. Cooking salt serves dual purposes: enhancing taste and acting as a preservative. However, its excessive consumption can pose health risks, including allergies and high blood pressure, due to its toxicity to the body.

8. Preservatives Predicament:

Have you ever stopped to read the ingredients list on your favorite packet of biscuits? Chances are, you'll come across additives like Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT), and sodium Benzoate. These preservatives, while extending the shelf life of biscuits, can wreak havoc on your health. Studies suggest they may be harmful to human blood and even contribute to DNA damage, posing potential risks to your overall well-being.

9. Allergen Alert:

Biscuit recipes vary widely and may contain common allergens such as wheat, dairy, or eggs. For individuals with food allergies or sensitivities, consuming biscuits

without carefully checking the ingredients list can have serious consequences. It's essential to scrutinize the recipe or food label for any potential allergens and opt for alternative snacks that cater to specific dietary needs.

10. Shelf-Life Struggles:

Ever wondered how long those biscuits can sit in your cupboard before going bad? While their low moisture content might prolong their shelf life, it's essential to be mindful of storage and food safety practices. Freshly baked biscuits can typically be stored for up to 18 days in a cupboard, while refrigerated biscuit dough should be used before expiration. Always check the expiration date on boxed biscuit mix to ensure freshness and safety.

Biscuits: A Hidden Danger for Pets and Animals

Biscuits, our favorite treats, may seem harmless, but they can be toxic to our furry friends. Ingredients like chocolate, raisins, macadamia nuts, and xylitol, commonly found in biscuits, can pose serious health risks to dogs and cats. Even small amounts can lead to symptoms ranging from vomiting to seizures and kidney

failure. It's crucial for pet owners to be aware of these dangers, read ingredient labels carefully, and keep biscuits containing harmful ingredients out of reach of pets. If ingestion occurs, seek veterinary care immediately. Remember, when it comes to biscuits, our pets' safety comes first.

While biscuits may seem like an innocent indulgence, their impact on your health can be far-reaching. From the hidden dangers of palm oil and excess salt to the risks associated with preservatives and allergens, there's much to consider when reaching for that next biscuit. By being mindful of your snack choices and opting for healthier alternatives, you can support your overall well-being and indulge in treats that nourish your body, not harm it. So, the next time you're tempted to reach for a biscuit, think twice – your health is worth it.



Dr. Sanjay Agrawal,
Leading Pharmaceutical
Consultant and
Editor-in Chief of IJM Today
Post Graduation Diploma in
Naturopathy and Yoga,
6/146, Malviya Nagar,
Jaipur -302017
Rajasthan