

# The Disadvantages of Canned Food Essay

## Introduction

Processed food, ready for immediate consumption, gains popularity all over the world as people are busy and often do not have time to cook, preferring to buy a pre-made meal. According to the survey held in 2013, approximately 60% out of 1,000 Americans used canned foods once or twice a week (MacPherson, 2020).

This number has recently increased due to the global situation, connected with the COVID-19 pandemic, as people began to purchase more preserves to limit visits to the stores. Today, about 98% of Americans claim to keep canned foods in their kitchens, an average of 24 cans (Byrnes, 2020). Such food provides numerous advantages, including its long shelf life, convenience for storage, provision of good nutrients and vitamins, and low cost.

However, extreme consumption of processed products can damage health due to multiple chemicals and artificial ingredients they contain and lead to such serious medical conditions as obesity and increase of sugar and cholesterol levels in the blood. Moreover, ecologists all over the world are concerned with the environmental damage, caused by canned food, providing side effects not only to the human organism but to nature's state.

## Side Effects of Canned Food

### Chemicals and Artificial Ingredients in Canned Food

Canned food often contains many chemicals and artificial ingredients, which may be harmful to the organism, especially in high doses, when a person regularly uses these products for their diet. According to Arielle Kestenbaum, a clinical dietitian, "most of the time there is no real difference in the nutritional value <...> What does make the difference, however, is what's added to preserve or "increase" the flavor" (Buckingham, 2020, para. 6).

One class of preservatives often used in processed food is sulfites, such as sulfur dioxide, sodium sulfite, and potassium bisulfite (The Alternative Daily, n.d.). These ingredients may lead to a severe allergic reaction; if a person experiences breathing problems within thirty minutes after eating canned food, they should immediately call for medical help. Moreover, these products often contain bisphenol-A (BPA), despite its chemical's toxic effects (The Alternative Daily, n.d.).

According to Kestenbaum, "about 10% of canned foods still have linings that carry the chemical" (Buckingham, 2020, para. 3). This ingredient has been found to cause hormonal disruption, which may lead to infertility, breast and prostate cancer, diabetes, obesity, and neurological conditions, such as ADHD in children.

Canned foods also contain excess sodium to increase their shelf life, which may result in the negative impact on the organism's performance. According to the experts, large amounts of

sodium “can cause negative effects on blood pressure and other heart-related conditions, and may also lead to water retention that may cause swelling” (Buckingham, 2020, para. 2). The research showed that one can of soup may contain up to 2,175 mg of sodium, which is the recommended daily intake (MacPherson, 2020). According to a study, held in 2014, such products also tend to lose phenolic compounds, “which are responsible for the color, flavors, and some of the health properties in produce, such as antioxidants” (MacPherson, 2020, para. 6).

In addition, canned food can contain *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria, which leads to botulism, a form of severe food poisoning, which can become lethal without immediate medical help. This problem is especially relevant for home-made products as they may be produced improperly. From the perspective of harmful chemicals contained in canned food, this type of nutrition is regarded as not healthy for human organisms as ingredients used for the production of such meals can lead to serious health problems.

### Weight Gain and Health Issues

Regular consumption of canned food can have a serious impact on health. It is connected with a high concentration of sugar and trans fats, which may lead to obesity, cholesterol level increase, and even diabetes. Processed food often contains much-added sugar, especially in fruit conservation with sweet syrups. Such amounts exceed the norms established by the World Health Organization (2015), recommends reducing the “daily intake of free sugars to less than 10% of the total energy intake” (para. 1). Consuming sugar in higher doses may lead to weight gain and the development of diabetes.

Trans fats are also dangerous for health as they “raise levels of low-density lipoprotein, or “bad,” cholesterol” (Smith, 2020, para. 48). The consumption of trans fats is linked to an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, and type two diabetes. According to a 2019 study, “a 2% increase in energy intake from trans fats is linked with a 23% increase in cardiovascular risk” (Smith, 2020, para. 48). From this perspective, canned food is considered to be harmful to health as the added sugar and trans fats in it can lead to the appearance of serious medical problems.

### Environmental Damage

Another serious issue, connected with the consumption of canned food, is littering as people often do not dispose of the packages properly. Ecologists all over the world are concerned with this problem as it damages the health of nature, which leads to the environmental situation becoming worse each year and increasing negative impact on human organisms. To appreciate and use natural resources efficiently, it is crucial that people optimize their recycling processes. Moreover, food canning industries “have impacted the environment in terms of water pollution, air pollution and last but not least solid pollution” (Teo Swee Sen, 2016, p. 1).

The process of product manufacturing requires potable water for numerous purposes, including initial cleaning of the material and equipment, pasteurizing, and cooling. Considering the number of materials, required for the production, it is followed by much solid waste. All of these factors

have a negative impact on the environment, and the world needs good pollution protection programs to decrease the risks of an ecological catastrophe.

## **Conclusion**

Canned food is a simple way of having a quick meal without the necessity to waste time for cooking, which has gained popularity due to its convenience. However, there are multiple disadvantages, making the consumption of the processed food bad for human health. First of all, negative side effects are connected with the presence of harmful chemicals and artificial ingredients in these products. They are such components as sulfites, bisphenol-A, and sodium, which can lead to serious medical problems, including cancer.

Canned food also contains large amounts of sugar and trans fats, leading to the appearance of weight problems and such health conditions as type two diabetes and high level of cholesterol in the blood. Moreover, the process of canned food manufacturing requires a big number of natural resources wasted, which leads to their potential ending and air and water pollution. It is also critical that the package used for these products is often disposed of not properly, leading to damage to nature, which in its turn, has an impact on the human organism. In order to minimize negative consequences, each person should contribute to the health of humanity.

## **References**

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