

Briefing Memo: AJPH UPF Feature Section and Fed UP! Launch

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AJPH Messaging

Topline Message on AJPH Feature Section

- Research in the American Journal of Public Health's Feature Section shows that ultra-processed food is not just an issue about diet. It is about how products are designed, marketed, and sold in ways that affect our health nationwide.
- Across this collection, the scientific evidence points to a clear conclusion: ultra-processed foods are contributing to chronic disease, and the companies that make them have played a direct role in promoting them despite the evidence on harm.
- This public health issue, which impacts American children most, is shaped by corporate practices, not just personal choice.
- That means real progress will require accountability from the food industry and meaningful government intervention, not just asking individuals to change their behavior.

Expanded Messages on Journal's Findings:

UPFs are now a dominant part of the American diet, which causes wide-ranging health risks

- Ultra-processed foods make up the majority of calories Americans consume today and have displaced more traditional, minimally processed foods.
- New research shows higher consumption is linked to heart disease, diabetes, cancer, obesity, earlier death and cognitive impairment and dementia in older adults.
- These patterns show up across large, nationally representative populations.

The harms of UPFs are not just about nutrients

- Even when you account for sugar, fat, and salt, the risks remain, which suggests something deeper is going on with how these foods are made.
- Processing itself, along with industrial ingredients/additives and food structure, can play a role.

These foods are designed to be overconsumed

- Many ultra-processed foods combine ingredients in ways that make them hard to stop eating.
- New research shows they often hit multiple thresholds linked to addictive or compulsive intake, which leads to overeating.

Industry practices helped shape this system

- Tobacco companies played a direct role in developing and scaling ultra-processed foods.
- They applied the same playbook used for scaling cigarette production and designing products, including product engineering, child-focused product development, and saturation marketing and distribution channels.

The impact is unequal and extends beyond health

- Health effects are often stronger in lower-income communities and can be lifelong for children.
- Many families depend on ultra-processed foods because they have been subsidized to be cheaper and easier to access.
- Food environments have become less healthy over time, with more “food swamps” and limited access to better options.
- Ultra-processed food production also contributes to pollution, plastic waste, and climate impacts.

The public already recognizes the problem

- New public opinion research found that not only do most Americans believe these products are harmful and even addictive, but that there is broad bipartisan support for government intervention to address the harms of UPF, including warning labels, restrictions on marketing to children, and stricter regulation.
- Awareness is growing, but public understanding on how to define a UPF is still limited.
- The findings suggest many parents want and deserve greater support navigating a food environment dominated by ultra-processed products aggressively marketed to children.
- Children deserve protection from the harms of ultra-processed food and parents deserve the help to ensure that

Policy Recommendations:

- **The clear, science-based definition of UPFs, Nova, should be used for policy purposes**
 - A consistent science-based definition of ultra-processed food aligned with the Nova food classification system is essential for policy solutions, labeling, and research.
 - Nova can be easily implemented by regulatory authorities and is essential for policy measures, including mandatory warning labels and can complement existing policies based on addressing dietary nutrient imbalances.
 - Use proven public health tools to address the impact and harms of UPFs.
 - Policies like warning labels, restrictions and bans on marketing ultra-processed food to children, and taxes have worked in other areas like tobacco.
 - To that end, governments should extend existing consumer protection laws and regulations that protect children from tobacco products to include ultra-processed food, including health warning labels, FOP, taxes restrictions on marketing and advertising.
 - These tools can help reduce exposure and shift behavior at scale.
- **Regulate product design and marketing**
 - Policies should address how these foods are formulated with industrial ingredients, not just what nutrients they contain, and ensure they are safe for people to eat.
 - Child-focused products should be scrutinized and discouraged in schools.
- **Improve access to healthier food**
 - People need affordable, realistic and available alternatives to ultra-processed food.
 - Possible solutions include investment in schools, communities, and food systems that support access to minimally processed foods.
- **Close regulatory gaps**
 - Many ingredients enter the food supply without full independent review or testing.
 - Policies should require full testing and evaluation of ingredients to ensure they are safe before they enter the food supply. This includes accounting for cumulative exposures in food and that health risks can occur at all levels..
 - Stronger regulatory systems free from corporate capture are needed to ensure safety and rebuild public trust.
 - Scientific review panels must be free from financial conflict of interest.
- **Utilize litigation as a tool for accountability**
 - Lawsuits by Attorneys General have historically played a key role in holding harmful industries accountable.
 - New lawsuit cases are emerging that focus on product design, marketing, and health harms from ultra-processed foods.
- **Take a coordinated, system-wide approach**

- No single policy will solve this problem. Effective action will require a combination of regulation, education, and structural change to our food systems.

Potential Q&A

Do you have any conflicts of interest in this space?

- None of the authors published in this feature section have financial conflicts of interest with the food industry.
- Our work is independent and based on peer-reviewed research.

Do you support RFK Jr. or the MAHA movement on this issue?

- It is encouraging to see growing awareness of ultra-processed food and its impact.
- This work shows that cleaning up our food environment enjoys broad support among the public.
- What matters most is that this issue is grounded in strong, evidence-based science.
- A clear, science-based definition for policy purposes is an important next step, so we are watching the FDA's work closely.
- What the research shows most clearly is the need for industry accountability.

Is [food] a UPF?

- It depends on how the food is made.
- Ultra-processed food is defined by the production process, including ingredients used, not just the category of food it is.

If these foods are cheap and convenient, what is the alternative?

- People need food that is affordable and practical, and it should also support their health.
- These foods have been made to be cheap and convenient as they have been heavily subsidized.
- That means improving access to minimally processed food in schools, workplaces, and communities.
- It means subsidizing minimally processed foods.
- It also means making sure the most widely available options are not working against people's health.

Are you blaming individuals for what they eat?

- No. This research shows that the issue is not individual willpower.
- Food is engineered to be addictive. Further, minimally processed foods are not accessible to many people by DESIGN.
- The food system has been shaped in ways that make these products the default choice.
- That is why solutions need to focus on the system, not just the individual.

Are ultra-processed foods addictive?

- Many people experience them that way, and new research helps explain why.
- Certain combinations of ingredients are linked to patterns of compulsive intake and overeating.
- That is part of why this issue goes beyond simple personal choice.

AJPH Press Release

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL:

5:00am ET on June 3, 2026

Contact: AJPH@berlinrosen.com

New Research in the *American Journal of Public Health* Links Ultra-Processed Food to Chronic Disease, Corporate Influence, and Growing Calls for Government Action

Leading academic researchers examine how tobacco companies helped shape today's ultra-processed food system; identify product engineering built for overconsumption; and highlight growing support for stronger protections for children, greater transparency, and accountability

NATIONWIDE — A major new feature section published in the July issue of the *American Journal of Public Health (AJPH)* presents one of the most comprehensive examinations to date of ultra-processed food (UPF) as a public health crisis shaped not only by nutrition, but by corporate practices, political influence, and regulation failures.

The collection of editorials, analytic essays, and research articles adds to the growing body of evidence linking ultra-processed food consumption to chronic disease, obesity, diabetes, cancer, dementia, and premature death. But the feature section also breaks new ground by examining how major tobacco companies helped build and scale the modern ultra-processed food industry — and by outlining what many public health experts say must come next: coordinated government intervention, stronger regulatory oversight, legal accountability, and greater protections for children from aggressive marketing and harmful food environments. The collection also examines how Nova and the UPF concept can inform and improve dietary guidance, dietary monitoring and target-setting, food regulation, and sustainable food system transitions.

“Taken together, this feature section shows that ultra-processed food is not simply an issue of personal responsibility or individual choice,” said Nicholas Chartres, lead editorial author and researcher at the University of Sydney and the Center to End Corporate Harm at the University of California, San Francisco. “The evidence increasingly points to a commercial system that has engineered, marketed, and normalized products linked to widespread chronic disease. The public health and government response must reflect that reality.”

The *AJPH* feature section frames ultra-processed food as a “commercial determinant of health,” arguing that many of the same corporate strategies once used by the tobacco industry — including product engineering, targeted marketing toward children, political influence, and efforts to shape science and public understanding on the harms of these products — have also shaped today’s food environment.

“UPF-based policies should be seen as complementary to, rather than in competition with, existing policies that address dietary nutrient imbalances,” said **Carlos Monteiro, MD, PhD, emeritus professor of nutrition and public health at the University of São Paulo and creator of the Nova food classification system.** *“Together, they strengthen the promotion of healthy diets and support the transition to healthier, more sustainable food systems.”*

New Research Highlights Health Harms and Addictive Potential

The collection includes multiple new studies using nationally representative U.S. datasets showing that higher consumption of ultra-processed food is associated with:

- Increased risk of metabolic syndrome, diabetes, cancer, obesity, and all-cause mortality
- Higher body mass index, blood sugar, and blood pressure
- Poorer cardiometabolic health outcomes, even when accounting for overall diet quality
- Greater risk of cognitive impairment and dementia in older adults

The issue also features new research on the addictive potential of ultra-processed food. One study identified nutritional characteristics associated with foods perceived as having higher addictive potential, finding that many ultra-processed products combine refined carbohydrates, fats, high energy density, and other characteristics in ways rarely found in minimally processed food.

Researchers say ultra-processing makes it possible to combine these nutrients in dense, rapidly absorbed forms that strongly engage the brain’s reward systems – making these products more likely to trigger addictive patterns of eating.

Tobacco Industry Documents Reveal How Ultra-Processed Food Was Developed and Scaled

Among the most significant findings in the collection are new analyses of internal company documents showing how major tobacco corporations helped shape the modern ultra-processed food system.

In the 1980s, Philip Morris purchased General Foods and Kraft with the goal of sharing chemical flavor additives, processing and packaging technologies, and product design expertise across its cigarette, beverage, and food businesses to drive growth and revenue.

One outcome of that effort to pool R&D across tobacco and food subsidiaries was the popular children’s product Lunchables. According to new analyses in *AJPH*, this product was launched and developed over 23 years by the tobacco giant, beginning with extensive research to design Lunchables based on understanding the unconscious desires of children and their mothers as consumers.

For children, Lunchables functioned like a toy, appealing to the child’s desire for independence, play, and control over their lunch. For parents, convenience, familiar ingredients, and gift-like packaging helped make a prepackaged meal feel more acceptable and special.

Philip Morris also used its “better-for-you” strategy developed for Marlboro cigarettes to create Low-Fat Lunchables, using the same processing technology that allowed Philip Morris to make a low-nicotine cigarette.

These strategies helped normalize highly processed, hyper-palatable foods throughout the U.S. and global food supply and influenced broader industry practices that continue today. Taken together, the new analyses in *AJPH* underscore the importance of protecting children from the harms that these marketing strategies have created and empowering parents with the help and information to ensure that.

New Polling Shows Bipartisan Support for Action

Importantly, the *AJPH* feature section moves beyond documenting harms and examines growing public support for policy intervention.

New nationally representative polling included in the collection found that:

- Roughly 70% of Americans believe ultra-processed food is addictive
- Approximately 73% support warning labels about health risks
- Approximately 64% support advertising restrictions for children
- Majorities across political parties support stronger government action to address harms associated with ultra-processed food

Researchers found that while public awareness of ultra-processed food is growing, many Americans still lack a clear understanding of what qualifies as a UPF — reinforcing public calls for a consistent, science-based definition for policy purposes.

The issue also includes a review of 43 federal and state policy proposals introduced between 2021 and 2025 aimed at regulating ultra-processed food. The proposals include warning labels, marketing restrictions, school food policies, and efforts to limit harmful additives.

*“Everybody gets that ultra-processed foods are not just a personal health issue, but a policy issue,” said **Marion Nestle, PhD, MPH, author and professor emerita of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University.** “What is striking about this research is the broad bipartisan support for practical measures like warning labels, marketing restrictions and bans, and improving access to healthier foods. Americans understand that the current food environment is failing too many people, and they want policymakers to act.”*

One analysis highlights lawsuits as another important tool for challenging harmful food industry practices, similar to how other industries — including tobacco, opioids, and automobiles — have faced lawsuits that helped expose internal practices, shift public opinion, and create pressure for stronger public protections.

Experts Call for Structural Reforms and Accountability

Across the collection, authors argue that meaningful progress will require systemic reforms rather than relying solely on individual behavior change.

Proposed policy responses highlighted in the issue include:

- Establishing the science-based definition of ultra-processed food for policy purposes using the Nova food classification system
- Going beyond regulating nutrient content to address how products are designed and marketed
- Extending existing consumer protection laws to protect all American, especially children, to include UPFs, including health warning labels, taxes, restrictions on marketing and advertising to children, and other public health tools modeled on tobacco control
- Improved school and community food environments, and greater investment in access to affordable minimally processed foods
- Litigation and legal accountability for harmful corporate practices

Several editorials also emphasize the disproportionate burden ultra-processed foods place on lower-income communities and the need for policies that improve access to affordable, minimally processed alternatives.

The collection further explores the environmental consequences of ultra-processed food production, including plastic pollution and climate impacts linked to major multinational corporations, including Coca-Cola and Unilever.

The feature section arrives amid growing public debate over ultra-processed food, increased scrutiny of food industry practices, and emerging lawsuits alleging that major food manufacturers knowingly marketed addictive and harmful products.

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About the American Journal of Public Health

The *American Journal of Public Health* is the official journal of the American Public Health Association and publishes peer-reviewed research, commentary, and analysis on issues affecting population health and health equity.

About the Featured Section

The July issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* features an expansive collection of editorials, research articles, and analytic essays focused on ultra-processed food. The full list of authors and papers appearing in the issue include:

- Nicholas Chartres — *Ultra-Processed Foods and Corporate Influence: Evidence, Regulation, and Policy Pathways to Address Chronic Disease in the US*
- Kelly D. Brownell — *Litigation as a Necessary Tool to Challenge Food Industry's Toxic Practices*
- Lindsey Smith Taillie — *Beyond the Body: the Ultra-Processed Food Industry's Environmental Toll*

- Marion Nestle — *The Politics of Ultra-Processed Foods: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*
- Gyorgy Scrinis — *Policies to Address the Market Power and Strategies of Ultra-Processed Food Corporations*
- Nadine Gracia — *Ultraprocessed Food, Food Insecurity, and Improving the Food Environment for All in the United States*
- Julia A. Wolfson — *Practical and Equity Considerations for Ultra-Processed Foods Policies*
- Tera Fazzino — *Ultra-Processed Foods in the Global Food System: The Role of U.S. Tobacco Companies*
- Carlos Monteiro — *What Do Nova and the Ultra-Processed Food Concept Offer to Policy-Makers?*
- Laura A. Schmidt — *Tobacco Industry Contributions to the Development of Ultra-Processed Food: A Case Study of Lunchables*
- Ashley N. Gearhardt — *Nutritional Characteristics of Foods with Addictive Potential: A Machine Learning Approach*
- Jeff Niederdeppe — *Public Awareness and Support for Governmental Intervention to Address Harms Associated with Consumption of Ultra-Processed Foods in the United States*
- Cristina R. Fernández — *Associations Between Household Food Insecurity, Nutrition Assistance Programs, Ultra-Processed Food Intake, and Diet Quality Among Pregnant Women (NHANES 2001–2018)*
- Heejin Lee — *Ultra-Processed Foods and the Risk of Cognitive Impairment and Dementia in U.S. Older Adults*
- Elise Sheinberg — *The Intersection of Diet Quality and Ultra-Processed Food Intake in Cardiometabolic Health*
- Daniel Wiese — *Changes in Neighborhood Foodscapes from 2003 to 2023 by Area Rurality in the United States*
- Juna Hatta-Langedyk — *Ultra-Processed Food vs. Diet Quality in Relation to Cardiometabolic Health and All-Cause Mortality (NHANES 1999–2018)*
- Aline D'Angelo Campos — *Operationally Defining and Targeting Ultra-Processed Foods: Insights from U.S. Policy Proposals*

AJPH Fact Sheet

FACT SHEET: American Journal of Public Health Feature Section: Ultra-Processed Food

The latest research and editorials in this feature section of the *American Journal of Public Health* examine ultra-processed food as a commercial determinant of health, exploring how major companies have applied strategies from the Big Tobacco playbook to shape today's food system. It links these practices to health inequities and broader harms—and highlights how tobacco control strategies could be used to address them. This feature section underscores the importance of protecting children from the harms of these products through health warning labels, front-of-package disclosures, bans and restrictions on marketing and advertising to children, and taxes on selected products.

Key Insights:

Ultra-Processed Food Now Dominates the U.S. Diet

Previous research has established that ultra-processed food now makes up the largest proportion of food consumed in the United States, accounting for approximately 60% of food purchased. An editorial in this feature section notes that consumption has increased most sharply among youth and lower-income populations, reshaping how Americans eat.¹

Science Shows Strong Links to Health Harms

New research in this feature section adds to a growing body of evidence linking higher consumption of ultra-processed food to adverse health outcomes. Across large, nationally representative datasets, higher consumption of ultra-processed food is consistently associated with increased risk of:

¹ Chartres, *Ultra-Processed Foods and Corporate Influence: Evidence, Regulation, and Policy Pathways to Address Chronic Disease in the US*

- Metabolic syndrome, diabetes, cancer, and all-cause mortality²
- Higher BMI, blood sugar, and blood pressure³
- **Dementia and cognitive impairment** in older adults⁴

Studies in the collection examining cardiometabolic health found associations between higher ultra-processed food intake and poorer cardiometabolic profiles, including findings that some associations persisted even after accounting for overall diet quality.⁵ **An editorial overview of the collection cites previous estimates linking ultra-processed food consumption to approximately 2.3 million deaths globally.**⁶

Food Designed for Overconsumption

New research in this feature section identified nutritional characteristics associated with food implicated in addictive patterns of intake, and marked by a loss of control⁷. These products frequently combine characteristics—such as high energy density and mixtures of refined carbohydrates and fats—that are rarely found together in minimally processed food.

The findings help explain how many ultra-processed foods are formulated in ways that may encourage addictive patterns of overconsumption.⁸

A Playbook from Big Tobacco

New analytic essays in this feature section examine internal company documents **showing how major tobacco companies helped shape the modern ultra-processed food system**. Researchers describe how, beginning in the 1980s, tobacco companies acquired leading food corporations and applied cigarette research and development strategies to food products.^{9,10}

²Hatta-Langedyk, *Ultra-Processed Food vs. Diet Quality in Relation to Cardiometabolic Health and All-Cause Mortality (NHANES 1999–2018)*

³ Hatta-Langedyk, *Ultra-Processed Food vs. Diet Quality in Relation to Cardiometabolic Health and All-Cause Mortality (NHANES 1999–2018)*

⁴ Lee, *Ultra-Processed Foods and the Risk of Cognitive Impairment and Dementia in U.S. Older Adults*

⁵ Sheinberg, *The Intersection of Diet Quality and Ultra-Processed Food Intake in Cardiometabolic Health*

⁶ Chartres, *Ultra-Processed Foods and Corporate Influence: Evidence, Regulation, and Policy Pathways to Address Chronic Disease in the US*

⁷ Gearhardt, *Nutritional Characteristics of Foods with Addictive Potential: A Machine Learning Approach*

⁸ Gearhardt, *Nutritional Characteristics of Foods with Addictive Potential: A Machine Learning Approach*

⁹ Fazzino, *Ultra-Processed Foods in the Global Food System: The Role of U.S. Tobacco Companies*

¹⁰ Schmidt, *Tobacco Industry Contributions to the Development of Ultra-Processed Food: A Case Study of Lunchables*

These included:

- Engineering products to maximize consumer appeal
- Developing highly palatable formulations
- Targeted marketing, especially toward children

One essay documents how Lunchables were developed using cigarette design strategies focused on optimizing consumer pleasure and reassuring parents concerned about childhood obesity. As cigarette product design and marketing approaches proved profitable for marketing food, they were adopted across the food industry and scaled globally.¹¹

The essay also argues that governments should consider extending consumer protection strategies historically used to reduce tobacco-related harms—including health warning labels, front-of-package disclosures, restrictions on marketing and advertising to children, and taxes on selected products—to ultra-processed food.

Corporate Influence on Science and Policy

An editorial overview of the feature section describes previous research showing how major ultra-processed food corporations have influenced what the public and policymakers understand about these products. This includes funding: nutrition research, academic institutions and scientific conferences, and leading nutrition scientists and professional bodies. **According to the editorial, these efforts have tried to influence scientific discourse, including work related to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.**¹²

A System that Drives Inequity

As the journal makes clear, the health impacts of ultra-processed food are not evenly distributed. New research in this feature section found stronger associations between ultra-processed food consumption and adverse health outcomes among lower-income populations.¹³

¹¹ Schmidt, *Tobacco Industry Contributions to the Development of Ultra-Processed Food: A Case Study of Lunchables*

¹² Chartres, *Ultra-Processed Foods and Corporate Influence: Evidence, Regulation, and Policy Pathways to Address Chronic Disease in the US*

¹³ Hatta-Langedyk, *Ultra-Processed Food vs. Diet Quality in Relation to Cardiometabolic Health and All-Cause Mortality (NHANES 1999–2018)*

Separately, a research article in the feature section examining changes in U.S. foodscapes between 2003 and 2023 found increases in “food swamps” and limited progress reducing food deserts, highlighting how many communities have become surrounded by less healthy food options over time.¹⁴

Broader Social and Environmental Costs

An editorial in this feature section highlights how ultra-processed food production contributes to significant environmental harms, including plastic pollution, with corporations such as Coca-Cola and Unilever identified as top global plastic polluters.¹⁵

The Case for Immediate Policy Action

Editorial authors and policy analysts in this collection point to a clear need for coordinated policy action to address the harms of ultra-processed food.

- Experts call for establishing a consistent, science-based definition of UPF for policy purposes based on the Nova food classification system, and using proven public health tools—such as warning labels, marketing restrictions and bans, and taxes—to reduce population exposure at scale, targeting children first.^{16 17 18 19 20}
- They emphasize that policies must regulate harmful nutrient contents, address how products are designed and marketed, and improve access to affordable, minimally processed food.^{21 22 23 24}
- At the same time, the research argues that stronger regulatory oversight and litigation are needed to close existing gaps and hold harmful companies accountable.²⁵
- Research reveals that UPFs have transcended traditional partisan divisions, as key findings show overwhelming nonpartisan support for mandatory safety testing of food chemicals (83.1%), advertising restrictions for children (over 64%), and front-of-package warning labels (over 64%). This widespread concern is paired with deep cynicism toward the industry—over 60% of

¹⁴ Wiese, *Changes in Neighborhood Foodscapes from 2003 to 2023 by Area Rurality in the United States*

¹⁵ Smith Taillie, *Beyond the Body: the Ultra-Processed Food Industry's Environmental Toll*

¹⁶ Monteiro, *What Do Nova and the Ultra-Processed Food Concept Offer to Policy-Makers?*

¹⁷ Campos, *Operationally Defining and Targeting Ultra-Processed Foods: Insights from U.S. Policy Proposals*

¹⁸ Schmidt, *Tobacco Industry Contributions to the Development of Ultra-Processed Food: A Case Study of Lunchables*

¹⁹ Nestle, *The Politics of Ultra-Processed Foods: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

²⁰ Scrinis, *Policies to Address the Market Power and Strategies of Ultra-Processed Food Corporations*

²¹ Scrinis, *Policies to Address the Market Power and Strategies of Ultra-Processed Food Corporations*

²² Monteiro, *What Do Nova and the Ultra-Processed Food Concept Offer to Policy-Makers?*

²³ Wolfson, *Practical and Equity Considerations for Ultra-Processed Foods Policies*

²⁴ Nestle, *The Politics of Ultra-Processed Foods: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

²⁵ Brownell, *Litigation as a Necessary Tool to Challenge Food Industry's Toxic Practices*

respondents believe companies intentionally design products to be addictive—triggering robust, public demand for government intervention.²⁶

- Taken together, the authors argue that effective action will require a combination of regulation, education, and structural change to our food systems.²⁷²⁸This includes: improving access to affordable minimally processed food; increasing nutrition assistance and SNAP support; investing in healthier school and community food environments; and making nutritious options more accessible and affordable for families.²⁹³⁰

Articles in this feature section:

Editorials

- Nicholas Chartres — *Ultra-Processed Foods and Corporate Influence: Evidence, Regulation, and Policy Pathways to Address Chronic Disease in the US*
- Kelly D. Brownell — *Litigation as a Necessary Tool to Challenge Food Industry’s Toxic Practices*
- Lindsey Smith Taillie — *Beyond the Body: the Ultra-Processed Food Industry’s Environmental Toll*
- Marion Nestle — *The Politics of Ultra-Processed Foods: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*
- Gyorgy Scrinis — *Policies to Address the Market Power and Strategies of Ultra-Processed Food Corporations*
- Julia A. Wolfson — *Practical and Equity Considerations for Ultra-Processed Foods Policies*
- Nadine Gracia — *Ultraprocessed Food, Food Insecurity, and Improving the Food Environment for All in the United States*

Analytic Essays

- Tera Fazzino — *Ultra-Processed Foods in the Global Food System: The Role of U.S. Tobacco Companies*
- Carlos Monteiro — *What Do Nova and the Ultra-Processed Food Concept Offer to Policy-Makers?*
- Laura A. Schmidt — *Tobacco Industry Contributions to the Development of Ultra-Processed Food: A Case Study of Lunchables*

Research Articles

- Ashley N. Gearhardt — *Nutritional Characteristics of Foods with Addictive Potential: A Machine Learning Approach*

²⁶ Niederdeppe, *Public Awareness and Support for Governmental Intervention to Address Harms Associated with Consumption of Ultra-Processed Foods in the United States*

²⁷ Wolfson, *Practical and Equity Considerations for Ultra-Processed Foods Policies*

²⁸ Chartres, *Ultra-Processed Foods and Corporate Influence: Evidence, Regulation, and Policy Pathways to Address Chronic Disease in the US*

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- Elise Sheinberg — *The Intersection of Diet Quality and Ultra-Processed Food Intake in Cardiometabolic Health*
- Daniel Wiese — *Changes in Neighborhood Foodscapes from 2003 to 2023 by Area Rurality in the United States*
- Juna Hatta-Langedyk — *Ultra-Processed Food vs. Diet Quality in Relation to Cardiometabolic Health and All-Cause Mortality (NHANES 1999–2018)*

Research Brief

- Aline D'Angelo Campos — *Operationally Defining and Targeting Ultra-Processed Foods: Insights from U.S. Policy Proposals*

FED UP! Two Pager



Let's get real about

ULTRA-PROCESSED FOOD

The Problem:

THE FOOD SYSTEM IS FAILING US AND WE'RE FED UP!

Ultra-processed food dominates the American diet and is ubiquitous in our schools, workplaces, and homes. This is the result of large food corporations reshaping our food system and flooding the market with products that are over-engineered to be hyper-palatable and shelf-stable. Ultra-processed food is now cheap, pervasive, and hard to distinguish or avoid.

The science is increasingly clear: high ultra-processed food consumption is associated with increased risk of heart disease, cancer, depression, metabolic disease, and premature mortality. Yet most people never see this research — and when they do, it's fragmented, overwhelming, or stripped of context.

Consumers are navigating a food system designed for corporate growth, not public health. They feel confused, blamed, and unsure who to trust. The problem isn't personal failure. It's structural design. And people are Fed UP!

Our Approach:

A SCIENCE-FIRST CONSUMER MOVEMENT TO CONFRONT ULTRA-PROCESSED FOOD

Fed UP! is a campaign grounded in peer-reviewed and conflict-free research built to translate the science around ultra-processed food into understanding, agency, and action.

We're building a movement of leading scientists, researchers, and like-minded organizations to:

- Distill complex, high-quality research into clear, accurate, and accessible public education
- Meet people where they are—concerned, frustrated, and looking for clarity—without shame or guilt
- Pair understanding with action, showing what individuals and communities can do now, while laying the groundwork for systemic change

Our public launch will coincide with a special edition of the American Journal of Public Health dedicated to ultra-processed foods, featuring new, groundbreaking research from many members of the Fed UP! movement on June 3, 2026. This moment anchors the campaign in credibility from day one and creates a shared reference point for public discourse.

Fed UP! exists to make the science of ultra-processed food impossible to ignore and possible to act on.

We speak the truth.

We're inclusive and supportive of fact-based science.

We're independent of special interests.

How We're Different:
SCIENCE ON OUR SIDE.
PEOPLE AT THE CENTER.

Science-first, always. Fed UP! is a movement of scientists and researchers promoting peer-reviewed research on ultra-processed food.

Conflict-of-interest-free: We are apolitical and independent from food manufacturers and are not angling to sell any products. Our goal is to educate, empower, and mobilize.

Translation, not dilution. We don't sensationalize findings or oversimplify to the point of distortion. We work with researchers to accurately translate their work into formats the public can understand and trust.

Human, not prescriptive. Our tone validates how hard this moment feels. We name the role of corporate design and profit incentives without blaming individuals for struggling to eat well in an unhealthy food environment.

Action-oriented. Education is the entry point, not the end goal. Fed UP! will give consumers the knowledge and tools to take action against ultra-processed food in their homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

Your Role:
SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTORS

- Have your latest research and work promoted on the Fed UP! website and social channels
- Receive communications and earned media support
- Contribute in ways that fit your availability
- Maintain full academic independence
- No lobbying or partisan alignment

Your Role:
RESOURCE PARTNERS

Partnering with Fed UP! will directly power a science-led effort to bring clarity, credibility, and action to the public conversation on ultra-processed food.

- Have your organization listed on the website as a partner and provide your educational resources on the website for consumers
- Partner with like-minded groups to realize Fed UP!'s mission
- Share stories that elevate the impact of UPFs and build momentum
- Amplify key messages and wins on social channels and with media
- Receive updates on new UPF science and regulatory activities



Fed UP! Press Release

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL:

5:00am ET on June 3, 2026

Contact: FedUP@berlinrosen.com

Scientists and Public Health Experts Launch “Fed UP!” Movement to Increase Transparency and Accountability Around Ultra-Processed Food

New national campaign aims to translate emerging science on ultra-processed food into accessible public education and action

NATIONWIDE — Today, leading scientists, researchers, and public health advocates launched Fed UP!, a new science-first consumer education movement dedicated to exposing the harms of ultra-processed food and empowering Americans with clear, evidence-based information about how the modern food system impacts health.

The launch coincides with a major new feature section in the *American Journal of Public Health*, where many Fed UP! scientific contributors have published new research linking ultra-processed food consumption to chronic disease, cognitive impairment, exposing product engineering and ingredient manipulation built for overconsumption, and examining how the largest tobacco companies helped build and scale the modern ultra-processed food industry.

The movement’s new website, **FedUPMovement.org**, serves as a public-facing hub translating scientific research into accessible education, resources, and tools designed to help families, communities, and policymakers better understand ultra-processed food and take meaningful action.

Scientific contributors to Fed UP! include:

- Dr. Kelly Brownell, Duke University
- Dr. Tera Fazzino, University of Kansas
- Dr. Ashley Gearhardt, University of Michigan
- Dr. Heejin Lee, Harvard University
- Dr. Cindy W. Leung, Harvard University
- Dr. Carlos Monteiro, University of Sao Paulo
- Dr. Marion Nestle, New York University
- Dr. Jeff Niederdeppe, Cornell University
- Dr. Laura Schmidt, University of California, San Francisco
- Dr. Lindsey Smith Taillie, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

“People are overwhelmed by confusing labels, relentless marketing, and mixed messages about what’s healthy,” said Dr. Lindsey Smith Taillie, Professor of Nutrition at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. “Fed UP! was created to make the science around ultra-processed food both understandable and actionable.”

Ultra-processed food now accounts for the majority of calories consumed in the United States, including many products marketed as convenient or even healthy. A growing body of peer-reviewed research has linked high consumption of these products to increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, cancer, depression, dementia, metabolic disease, and premature death.

The issue goes beyond nutrition alone.

“This isn’t about blaming individuals or telling families they lack willpower,” said Dr. Laura Schmidt, Professor at the University of California, San Francisco. “The food environment has been engineered to prioritize corporate profits over public health. People deserve honest information about how these products are designed, marketed, and made so difficult to avoid.”

Fed UP! highlights how ultra-processed food is a systemic public health issue shaped by corporate practices, including product engineering, aggressive marketing, and regulatory gaps that allow many industrial food additives and ingredients into the food supply without comprehensive, independent review. It is designed to bridge the gap between scientific research and public understanding at a time of growing concern about food system transparency and chronic disease.

The campaign also spotlights emerging research documenting the historical influence of major tobacco companies on the modern food industry. New analyses published in the *American Journal of Public Health* show how tobacco corporations applied cigarette research, consumer psychology, and product engineering strategies to packaged food products beginning in the 1980s — helping normalize the highly processed, hyper-palatable foods seen throughout the American diet today.

Above all, Fed UP! is a science-first movement:

- Independent from food manufacturers and special interests
- Grounded in peer-reviewed, conflict-free science
- Focused on public education without shame or guilt
- Dedicated to translating research accurately and accessibly
- Committed to pairing education with action

The campaign features educational explainers, research summaries, videos, social media content, and practical resources for individuals and communities seeking to better understand ultra-processed food and advocate for healthier food environments.

The movement also plans to work alongside researchers and aligned organizations to elevate new science and support broader conversations around transparency, regulation, and accountability.

The launch comes as public awareness of ultra-processed food continues to rise nationwide, and the public conversation is shifting rapidly.

“People are fed up with a food system that makes unhealthy products cheap, convenient, and unavoidable, while leaving families to shoulder the health consequences. Families are asking important questions about how food is made, marketed, and regulated, and how they can be a part of change,” said Dr. Ashley Gearhardt, Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan. “Fed UP! is a new resource hub for anyone to access practical tools and information that can help them lead healthier lives. Fed UP! is here to help demystify our food system and empower communities and families through transparency and accountability.”

Fed UP! emphasizes that its mission is not perfection or food policing, but transparency, accountability, and making it easier for people to access food that genuinely supports health and well-being.

To learn more, visit FedUPMovement.org and follow Fed UP! on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

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About Fed UP!

Fed UP! is a science-first movement of researchers, scientists, and aligned organizations working to educate the public about ultra-processed food and advocate for healthier food systems grounded in evidence, transparency, and accountability. The movement translates peer-reviewed research into accessible public education and action-oriented resources designed to empower individuals, families, and communities.

Fed UP! Tough Q&A

Credibility and messenger questions

- **Who is funding Fed UP!?**
 - Fed UP! is funded by multiple nonconflicted, nonpartisan organizations, and also includes resource partners who are compiling and sharing educational tools for consumers, like Healthy Food America, EatReal, Food Fight USA, and more.
 - Fed UP! does not accept funding or support from ultra-processed food or beverage companies, or from organizations representing their interests.
 - Our work is grounded in independent research focused on public health, not corporate influence.
 - If pressed further, Fed UP! LLC is funded by EarthShare.

- **Who are your scientific advisors, and are they compensated?**
 - Fed UP! is a movement of nonconflicted scientists and researchers, educators, and aligned organizations working to make the science of ultra-processed food easier to understand and act on.
 - The most important principle is independence.
 - Fed UP! does not accept funding or support from ultra-processed food or beverage companies or organizations representing their interests. Our work is grounded in independent research focused on public health, not corporate influence.

- **Why create a new movement instead of working through existing organizations?**
 - Fed UP! is unique in that we are science-first: our movement of nonconflicted scientists and researchers, educators, and aligned organizations are working to translate the science of ultra-processed food for the public, so it is easier to understand and act on.
 - Our goal is to give consumers the transparency they deserve.
 - Our science-first movement shares the facts behind what Americans are eating, in order to empower families and help create a healthier food system for everyone.

- **What's the relationship between AJPH and Fed UP!? Are you using the journal to push an agenda?**
 - The *American Journal of Public Health* is an independent, peer-reviewed scientific journal. Fed UP! did not produce the research or influence the findings in the journal.
 - New research in the *American Journal of Public Health* is helping pull back the curtain on how ultra-processed food impacts our health—and how Big Food companies have intentionally shaped the systems, products, and narratives behind them.
 - Fed UP! is focused on translating this research for the public, so it is easier to understand and act on.

- **Will you publish your research, message testing, funders, and methodology?**
 - Fed UP! is committed to transparency. We do not accept funding or support from ultra-processed food or beverage companies, or organizations representing their interests.
 - When our scientific contributors conduct research or message testing, methodologies are included when that research is published.
 - Our credibility depends on being independent of special interests and grounded in evidence-based science.

- **Do you support RFK Jr. or the MAHA movement on this issue?**
 - It is encouraging to see growing awareness of ultra-processed food's impact on public health.
 - What matters most is that this conversation stays grounded in strong, independent, evidence-based science.
 - A clear, science-based definition of ultra-processed food for policy purposes is an important next step, so we are watching the FDA's work closely.
 - In fact, a multidisciplinary expert panel recently convened by Healthy Eating Research (HER) recommended using the Nova Category 4 framework as the scientific basis for defining ultra-processed foods in policy. The panel also proposed a practical operational definition based on industrial ingredients like cosmetic additives and non-culinary ingredients, while recognizing that some nutritionally beneficial products may warrant different policy treatment.
 - What the research shows most clearly is the need for greater transparency and industry accountability.

- **Have you met with the Trump administration on this issue?**
 - Fed UP! is a movement of nonconflicted, nonpartisan scientists and researchers, educators, and aligned organizations working to make the science of ultra-processed food easier to understand and act on. Government plays a critical role in addressing this public health harm.
 - We are meeting with policymakers on both sides of the aisle, including in the Trump administration, to discuss our movement to help people better understand the science around ultra-processed food and to support a healthier, more transparent food system.
 - It is encouraging to see growing public awareness around ultra-processed food across the political spectrum. What matters most is that this conversation stays focused on evidence, transparency, and public health.

- **Would you work with the Trump administration if it supported restrictions on ultra-processed food?**
 - Fed UP! supports evidence-based public health approaches regardless of where or who they originate from.
 - This issue affects families across the country and concern about ultra-processed food is increasingly bipartisan. What matters most is that decisions are guided by independent science, transparency, and public health evidence—not industry influence.

- The research shows clearly that Americans want greater accountability, clearer information about what’s in their food, and stronger protections for children and families.
- **Are you lobbying Congress? What specific policy changes do you support?**
 - Fed UP! is focused on empowering people with evidence-based facts so they can make informed decisions about food—and so Big Food companies are held to basic standards of transparency and accountability.
 - Consumers deserve clearer information about what’s in their food and how it’s made.
 - Until now, Big Food companies have been in the driver's seat. It's time for science to drive the conversation around ultra-processed food.
- **With Marty Makary stepping down as FDA Commissioner and Kyle Diamantas now serving in an acting capacity, what does this mean for public health leadership?**
 - At a moment when Americans are increasingly concerned about chronic disease, food safety, and public health, the country needs steady, credible, science-driven leadership.
 - What matters most now is ensuring that federal health agencies are guided by independent science and strong public health leadership, free from industry influence, to make key decisions.
- **Could excluding UPF companies from policy and scientific spaces limit valuable expertise or collaboration?**
 - The issue is not whether companies have expertise. The issue is whether public health decisions are being guided by independent science, transparency, and public health evidence—not industry influence.
 - Research highlighted in the AJPH feature section shows how some Big Food companies have influenced nutrition science and public understanding of ultra-processed food in ways that can create conflicts of interest. Fed UP! believes policy and scientific spaces should prioritize transparency, independence, and public trust.
 - That does not mean all dialogue is impossible. But when industry profits depend on maintaining consumption of ultra-processed food, strong safeguards are necessary to protect the integrity of science and public health decision-making.
- **What role should Big Food companies play in food policy development? Can partnerships be constructive?**
 - Research shows that Big Food companies have often used their influence to shape nutrition science and public policy in ways that protect profits and downplay health harms.
 - Fed UP! believes public health policies should be guided first and foremost by independent science, transparency, and public health evidence—not industry influence.
- **What about the economic impact on jobs and industry? Won't UPF policies hurt people's livelihoods?**
 - The current system is already creating enormous costs through chronic disease, healthcare spending, and poorer long-term health outcomes. People deserve a food system that supports both their health and economic well-being.
 - We're focused on building a healthier food system that works better for families.

- Fed UP! supports expanding access to nutritious food while creating opportunities for healthier food production, local agriculture, school food programs, and community-based food systems. Public health and economic opportunity do not have to be in conflict.

Core science and evidence questions

- **Are you saying ultra-processed foods cause disease, or just that they are associated with disease?**
 - The evidence shows strong and consistent associations between high ultra-processed food consumption and serious health risks.
 - The science behind the harms of ultra-processed food is increasingly clear enough to raise serious public health concerns.
 - Fed UP! is focused on making that evidence understandable and actionable while continuing to follow the science.
- **What is the strongest evidence you have that processing itself is harmful, rather than sugar, salt, saturated fat, calories, or low fiber?**
 - The strongest evidence is that many studies still find elevated risks of processing after accounting for overall nutritional quality or specific nutrients.
 - This suggests the concern is not only about sugar, salt, fat, calories, or low fiber, but also about how these products are formulated, structured, marketed, and consumed.
 - That does not mean food components do not matter. They do. But focusing only on the components lets companies reformulate around the edges without addressing the deeper issue: a food system flooded with unhealthy products designed for convenience, shelf stability, intense appeal, and overconsumption.
- **Which health harms are you most confident about, and which are still emerging or uncertain?**
 - The strongest claims are around associations between high ultra-processed food consumption and cardiometabolic risks, obesity-related chronic disease, mortality, and mental health outcomes.
 - New research in the AJPH feature section found associations between higher ultra-processed food intake and increased risk of metabolic syndrome, diabetes, cancer, all-cause mortality, higher BMI, blood sugar, blood pressure, and cognitive decline in older adults.
- **What claims will you not make because the science is not strong enough yet?**
 - We will not claim that every ultra-processed food has the same health impact.
 - We will not tell people that individuals are to blame for a food system shaped by Big Food companies.
- **Given that the science is serious but still evolving, are you helping the public understand risk, or are you turning uncertainty into a movement before the evidence is settled?**
 - We are helping the public understand the risks of ultra-processed food.
 - The science is rigorous, substantial, and growing: high consumption of ultra-processed food is associated with increased risk of heart disease, cancer, depression, metabolic

disease, and premature mortality. At the same time, we are careful about how we communicate it.

- The reality is that most people never see the research behind ultra-process food clearly explained. Our role is to translate peer-reviewed, conflict-free science into clear public education—without shame, without spin, and without overstating what the evidence says.
- The fact that federal agencies are working toward a clearer definition of UPFs shows why this conversation matters now. FDA and USDA said a uniform definition would support consistency in research and policy around health concerns linked to UPF consumption.
- **Are you overstating the science when federal agencies are still working toward a uniform U.S. definition of ultra-processed foods?**
 - No. The fact that FDA and USDA are working toward a uniform definition shows that this is a serious public health issue that needs clarity.
 - The agencies' 2025 request for information specifically says a uniform definition would support consistency in research and policy around health concerns linked to UPF consumption.
 - Fed UP! supports that process. The strong evidence around the harms of UPFs warrants public education, transparency, and accountability now.
- **Is “ultra-processed food” a scientifically precise category, or is it a political and advocacy label?**
 - Ultra-processed food is a scientific concept used in a large and growing body of peer-reviewed research, including studies using the Nova classification system.
 - It is also an area where experts and federal agencies are working toward more consistency.
 - That is why Fed UP! supports a clear, science-based definition of UPFs.
 - Consumers need language that helps them understand how food is made and marketed, and ultimately impacts their health.
- **The Nova classification system is widely used but also criticized. Why are you relying on it?**
 - Nova is widely used in peer-reviewed literature and has helped researchers study patterns that would be hard to capture by nutrients alone. It focuses attention on industrial formulation and processing—not just sugar, salt, or fat.
 - Fed UP! also supports a clear, science-based definition of UPFs that can help consumers, researchers, and policymakers speak more consistently about it.
- **Is your campaign warning people away from all packaged foods, or only specific categories?**
 - We are focused on educating people on the harms of ultra-processed food: industrially formulated products that now dominate the American diet and are often designed to be cheap, shelf-stable, intensely appealing, and widely available.
 - This is not about policing what people eat. It is about helping people understand what they are being sold and giving them clearer information to make informed choices.
- **How do you avoid confusing consumers when many “healthy” products are technically ultra-processed?**
 - By being honest and pointing to real science. Many people are trying to make healthy choices, but they are navigating labels, marketing claims, and products that can be difficult to understand.

- Fed UP! exists to make the science impossible to ignore and possible to act on.
- We want consumers to have transparent, evidence-based information about how foods are made, how they are marketed, and what the research says about health.

Consumer behavior and practicality questions

- **What exactly do you want people to do tomorrow morning when they go grocery shopping?**
 - The first step is simply awareness: look past the front-of-package claims and look at how the product is made.
 - But right now, consumers are navigating confusing labels, marketing claims, and products that can be difficult to understand. Families are doing their best, but the cards are stacked against them.
 - That’s why Fed UP! is focused on giving people clear, evidence-based information so they can make more informed choices.
 - At the same time, we know individual shopping choices are not enough. Families also need a food system that makes real, nutritious food easier to access and afford.
- **Are you telling people to stop eating UPFs entirely?**
 - This is not about policing individual foods.
 - The problem is that ultra-processed food has become so pervasive that for many families, it is no longer one option among many—it is the default.
 - Fed UP! is focused on helping people understand that system and building support for healthier communities where minimally processed foods are easier to access.
- **Can someone have a healthy diet that includes some ultra-processed foods? Where do you draw the line?**
 - Our concern is chronic, high exposure in a food system where ultra-processed products have become the default.
 - Fed UP! is focused on helping people understand the health harms of a diet dominated by ultra-processed food.
 - People deserve a food system where nourishing foods are easier to access, afford, and choose, and Fed UP! is committed to working to make that system within reach.
- **Could your messaging backfire by making healthy eating feel impossible?**
 - That is exactly what we want to avoid. We meet people where they are—concerned, frustrated, and looking for clarity—without shame or guilt.
 - The message is not “you failed.” The message is “the system has been designed this way, and you deserve better information and better options.” We want people to feel informed and empowered, not overwhelmed.
- **How do you make the campaign actionable beyond “cook more”?**
 - Cooking more is not realistic advice for everyone, and it does not address the scale of the problem.
 - Fed UP! pairs understanding with action.

- That means helping people identify how ultra-processed food shows up in their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities; giving them tools to ask better questions; and building support for transparency, accountability, and healthier food environments.
 - This movement is about growing that awareness and support to help families lead healthier lives.
- **How will you help people tell the difference between occasional convenience and chronic exposure?**
 - We will focus on patterns, not perfection. Occasional convenience is part of real life.
 - The concern is that ultra-processed food now makes up the majority of the American diet and is especially high among children.
 - Fed UP! helps people recognize how often these products show up, how they are marketed, and how they can quietly become everyday staples that harm their health. That awareness is the first step toward change.
- **What is your guidance for parents whose kids reject less processed foods?**
 - Parents are doing their best, and this is not about blame.
 - Kids are surrounded by products engineered to be highly appealing and marketed to them constantly—on screens, in stores, at school, and on packaging.
 - Our guidance starts with compassion and realism. Families deserve support, not guilt. Fed UP! is working to make the science clearer and to build momentum for healthier communities where better options are easier for families and children to access.
- **What about cultural food traditions and preferences? Are these threatened by UPF policies?**
 - In many ways, this conversation is about protecting and reclaiming real food traditions—not threatening them.
 - Ultra-processed foods have increasingly displaced home cooking, local food cultures, and traditional diets with industrially formulated products designed for convenience, shelf stability, and mass marketing. Fed UP! believes people should be able to enjoy food that is nourishing, culturally meaningful, and connected to their communities.
 - This is about creating a healthier food system where real, minimally processed food is easier to access, afford, and choose.
- **What about food deserts and structural inequity — is UPF really the issue?**
 - The research makes clear that all three issues are deeply connected.
 - Big Food companies have spent decades flooding low-income communities with ultra-processed products, making healthier options harder to access.
 - The AJPH feature section highlights how our everyday food landscape has become less healthy over time, particularly in lower-income communities, with increases in “food swamps” and limited progress reducing food deserts. And the edition calls for a combination of regulation, education, and structural change to our food systems to address these challenges. This includes: improving access to affordable minimally processed food; increasing nutrition assistance and SNAP support; investing in healthier school and community food environments; and making nutritious options more accessible and affordable for families.

- Families deserve support, not guilt. Fed UP! is working to make the science clearer and to build momentum for healthier communities where better options are easier for families and children to access.
- **Children face limited food options in schools. How do you suggest addressing this?**
 - Food should nourish us. But today, ultra-processed food has become ubiquitous in our schools, homes, and communities—not because families failed, but because large food corporations reshaped the food system around cheap, heavily marketed, ultra-convenient products.
 - This is about recognizing how our food system has been grossly manipulated by Big Food companies — and understanding how that manipulation is impacting children’s health.
 - Our guidance starts with compassion and realism. Families deserve support, not guilt. Fed UP! is working to make the science clearer and to build momentum for healthier communities where better options are easier for families and children to access.
 - Real change starts with transparency. When families, schools, and communities can clearly see how these products are designed, marketed, and normalized — and better understand the science behind their health effects — it becomes possible to demand better options and stronger standards for food served to children.
 - By pulling back the curtain on how ultra-processed foods are marketed and consumed, we can empower families, inform policymakers, and encourage schools and communities to prioritize children’s health.
 - We believe food should support children’s health and well-being, and that families deserve a simpler path to choosing food that nourishes them.
- **Don’t food companies just give consumers what they want?**
 - Consumers should absolutely have choices. But people also deserve transparency about how products will impact their health, and they deserve a food system that is not dominated by products engineered to drive overconsumption.
 - The way our food is currently made and marketed makes ultra-processed food the default, not the exception.
 - Fed UP! is working to help people better understand how these products are designed and marketed, while supporting a healthier food system where real, nutritious food is easier to access, afford, and choose.
- **Why is “Big Food” to blame when individuals make choices? What about personal responsibility? Are you blaming parents?**
 - The blame shouldn’t be with parents and families who are doing their best.
 - This is about recognizing how our food system has been grossly manipulated by Big Food companies — and understanding how it’s impacting our health.
 - Ultra-processed food dominates our diets not because Americans are weak-willed, but because Big Food companies have flooded stores, schools, and communities with industrially formulated products designed to maximize craving and encourage over-consumption.
 - Our goal is to give consumers the transparency they deserve.

- That’s why we’re building a science-first movement to share the facts behind what Americans are eating, empower families, and help create a healthier food system for everyone.
- **Is this realistic for low-income families?**
 - Right now, the cards are stacked against many families—especially in low-income communities where ultra-processed food is often the cheapest, most heavily marketed, and most accessible options available.
 - Families deserve support, not guilt.
 - Fed UP! is focused on addressing this challenge for families everywhere by empowering them with clear, evidence-based information about what they’re eating, holding Big Food accountable, and building momentum for healthier communities where better options are easier for families and children to access.
 - That includes working to support healthier school and community food environments, making nutritious options more accessible and affordable for families, and increasing nutrition assistance and SNAP support.
- **So what foods should people stop eating tomorrow?**
 - The real focus should be on helping people eat more real, nourishing food. Real food still retains the structure nature gave it — natural fibers and nutrients that signal fullness and support long-term health.
 - The broader picture is becoming increasingly clear: diets high in ultra-processed food are associated with increased risk of chronic disease, while minimally processed and whole foods are consistently linked to better health outcomes.
 - Food should nourish us.
 - Our guidance starts with compassion and realism. Families deserve support, not guilt.
 - That’s why Fed UP! is working to make the science clearer and to build momentum for healthier communities where better options are easier for families and children to access.

Media scrutiny and attack questions

- **Is this just another food panic? We’ve seen campaigns against fat, carbs, GMOs, gluten, seed oils, and sugar. Why is this different?**
 - This is different because it is not focused on demonizing one nutrient or telling people to follow a fad diet.
 - The science points to a broader public health issue: high consumption of ultra-processed food is associated with serious chronic disease, and the AJPH feature section highlights how corporate practices helped shape this system.
 - Fed UP! is not about panic. It is about evidence, transparency, and accountability.
- **Are you trying to get women back in the kitchen or promoting “trad wife” culture?**
 - No, Fed UP! is not prescribing lifestyles or placing more responsibility on women and families who are already doing their best.
 - Fed UP! recognizes that ultra-processed food became dominant because our food system was reshaped around cheap, heavily marketed, ultra-convenient products—not

because families failed. The research makes clear that people are navigating a food environment designed for corporate growth and overconsumption, not public health.

- This conversation is about transparency, accountability, and making it easier—not harder—for families to access food that supports their health. We want healthier communities and a food system where real, nutritious food is affordable, accessible, and realistic for everyone.
- **Are you focused on childhood obesity? Isn't that stigmatizing?**
 - This conversation is not about stigmatizing children, parents, or body size. It's about recognizing that ultra-processed food now dominates what many children are eating every day and is linked to chronic disease, mental health concerns, metabolic disease, and long-term health harms.
 - Research shows ultra-processed food now accounts for an especially high share of calories consumed by children and adolescents. At the same time, kids are surrounded by aggressive marketing for ultra-processed products across TV, social media, video games, schools, and packaging in grocery stores.
 - Parents are doing their best in a food environment that has been heavily shaped by Big Food companies.
 - Fed UP!'s goal is to build broader support for transparency, accountability, and making it easier for families to access food that supports long-term health.
- **What's your position on GLP-1 drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy?**
 - Fed UP! is focused on the food system and the growing body of evidence around ultra-processed food—not on individual medical treatments.
 - Fed UP! is focused on preventing diet-related disease, whereas GLP-1's are about treatment. We don't want consumers, especially kids, to get sick in the first place.
 - Decisions about GLP-1 treatment should remain between patients and their healthcare providers. At the same time, medication cannot fix a food system where ultra-processed products dominate grocery stores, schools, workplaces, and communities, and harm people's health.
 - Americans deserve a food system that supports long-term health, rather than one built around products engineered for overconsumption and profit.

Measurement and accountability questions

- **What does success look like: awareness, reduced consumption, policy change, product reformulation, or health outcomes?**
 - Success starts with awareness, but it does not end there. Fed UP! exists to make the science impossible to ignore and possible to act on.
 - Success means more people understand how ultra-processed foods are designed, marketed, and linked to health harms. It means stronger public support for transparency and accountability. And over time, it means a healthier food system where real, nutritious food is easier to access, afford, and choose.
- **Are you calling for all researchers and research institutions to reject funding from food companies?**

- Fed UP! believes transparency and independence are essential to maintaining public trust in nutrition science.
 - We recognize that industry funding exists across many areas of research. But conflicts of interest should be taken seriously and disclosed clearly, especially when companies have financial interests tied to ultra-processed food products and public perceptions of their safety or nutrition.
 - That's why Fed UP! is grounded in peer-reviewed, conflict-free science and focused on helping people better understand the evidence without industry influence shaping the conversation.
- **What is your red line for responsible communication?**
 - Our red line is simple: no spin, no shame, no special interests.
 - We will not sensationalize findings, oversimplify the science to the point of distortion, or blame families for the unhealthy food system.
 - Fed UP! exists to make the science impossible to ignore and possible to act on.

Additional questions

- **What countries are getting this right in terms of regulation and policy?**
 - Several countries are already taking meaningful action to address the harms of foods often with high levels of salt, sugar, and saturated fat - an important marker of ultra-processed food and create healthier food environments for children and families.
 - Chile has implemented strong policies around front-of-package warning labels, restrictions on marketing unhealthy foods to children, and healthier school food standards.
 - Mexico has introduced taxes on sugary drinks and unhealthy foods, front-of-package warning labels, and policies focused on improving school food environments.
 - Brazil has been a global leader in school food policy and dietary guidance rooted in minimally processed foods, including national school meal standards and the development of the Nova food classification system.
 - Importantly, U.S. states are also taking action, such as California, which has banned UPF's in school meals and is pursuing a non-UPF food certified standard.
 - More than 130 bills have been introduced in state legislatures aimed at regulating ultraprocessed foods and improving nutrition from both parties, in both deep red and deep blue states.
 - These examples prove that it is entirely possible for governments to use public health tools — including warning labels, marketing restrictions, healthier school food standards, and taxes — to help reduce exposure to ultra-processed food, and the U.S. should follow suit to protect children here too.

- **Why is this research U.S. focused?**
 - The United States has one of the highest levels of ultra-processed food consumption in the world, especially among children.

- Ultra-processed food now makes up the majority of calories consumed in the U.S., and many of the companies shaping the global ultra-processed food system are headquartered or heavily concentrated here.
- Yet while this is a public health issue affecting families across the country, U.S. policymakers and regulators have done little so far to remedy it, and as researchers, we believe stronger transparency, accountability, and science-based policy discussions are urgently needed in the U.S.

- **What do you want people to do when they learn about UPFs and how will this change?**
 - First, we want people to understand that this is not about personal failure or perfection. Families have been asked to navigate a food system that was deliberately reshaped around ultra-processed products designed for convenience, overconsumption, and profit.
 - Our goal is to empower people with clear, evidence-based information so they can make more informed choices about what they're eating and feeding their families.
 - The truth is, individual choices alone are not enough. Real change also requires healthier food environments, stronger transparency, accountability, and public policies that make nutritious food easier to access and afford.
 - Fed UP! exists to make the science around ultra-processed food impossible to ignore and possible to act on — whether through personal awareness, community advocacy, or broader public support for healthier food systems.

Suggested Social Media on Fed UP!

Sample social media:

“Big news! I’m thrilled to share that my latest paper has been published in the American Journal of Public Health [[tag APHA social handles](#)], shining a much-needed light on [XYZ]. Building off this momentum, I’m also officially joining the Fed UP! Movement as a scientific contributor! This is a science-first movement dedicated to making the science around ultra-processed foods (UPFs) impossible to ignore—and more importantly, actionable. Let’s build healthier communities together. Join us at [FedUPMovement.org](#)”

Our handles will be we_are_fedup on [Instagram](#) and We.Are.the.FedUp.Movement on [Facebook](#). We encourage you to share content from these pages!

Next Steps and Follow Up

After June 3, you can expect a compilation of media press clips on both AJPH and the Fed UP! campaign, topline social media traction, and posts we would love you to amplify. We will also be in touch about upcoming media opportunities for you to share your research.