3 Reasons You're Addicted to Junk Food

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Question: If junk food is so bad for the body and bad quality overall, why is it so popular? You'd think no one would touch it."

Answer: That's an excellent question, and I certainly can't say that I have the answer. I do have some thoughts on the subject -- and maybe one or more are correct, so here goes:

First, let me back up and define 'junk foods.' It's the stuff you eat that has little to no nutritional value, usually combined with ingredients that are bad for you, or is high in calories when consumed in excess.

So that means candy, chips, cookies, cake, sugary soft drinks, greasy burgers, hot dogs, French fries, ice cream, and most things that served at fast food restaurants qualify as junk foods.

So why do so many people eat junk foods? Here are three possible reasons:

#1 It's Cheap
I think one big reason junk food is popular is because a lot of it is cheap to buy. I mean you can go to most any fast food restaurant and order something off a 'dollar' menu of some sort. If you have a couple of bucks in your wallet, you can buy a full meal.

Same story at the grocery store. Cheap snacks, inexpensive high-sodium and high-fat meals can be found on the shelves. Healthier foods -- like fresh fruits and vegetables -- tend to be more expensive. Those bags or cups of instant ramen noodles cost less than 50 cents, whereas an orange costs a dollar.

Although a lot of junk food is cheap to buy up front, I think the argument can be made that cheap junk foods end up being more expensive in the long run due to their negative impact on health.

#2 It's Easy
This reason goes along with the being cheap part. Junk food is lurking in vending machines, convenience stores, and even stores that don't typically sell food items might have snacks and sodas near the cashiers. And those instant meals I already mentioned? They're easy to prepare, and you can store a bunch of them in your kitchen cabinets for a long time.

Of course, fast foods live up to the name. You can order a fast food meal and then eat it a minute or two later. Or you can order your meal from your car to can save time by wolfing it down while you drive away.

That drive-thru thing isn't good, though. Not only is the food bad for your health, but dropped fries can accumulate in your car, under the seat. And that gets kind of gross.

#3 It's Sweet, Fatty or Salty (Or All Three)
Rarely do junk foods tempt you with delicate or complicated flavors. They pretty much hit you hard with sweet, fatty and salty flavors. I think those simple flavors might be preferred by people

who are picky eaters -- it could be the slightly bitter flavor of many vegetables turns some people off, especially kids.

But it's more than flavor. Various combinations of sugar and fat make for textures people like. Fat makes foods feel smooth and creamy, like ice cream. Starchy potato and corn chips cooked in hot oil have a satisfying crunch. That's not to say that healthy foods don't have a nice texture, but sometimes the textures of fresh fruits and vegetables take a little getting used to.

Then It Becomes a Habit
Since junk foods are easy to find, easy to make, and a lot of them just flat out taste good, consuming them becomes a habit. That's the real problem. I mean eating a candy bar now and then or snarfing down a bag of fries once in awhile isn't all that big a deal. But when junk foods make up a big part of your daily diet, then you run the risk of becoming overweight and obese, plus you're not going to get enough of the nutrients and fiber your body needs for good health.

So, next time you find yourself standing in line at a burger joint or staring at a vending machine, think about how your choice could affect your health. Then walk away and find something better.