



## Don't be a Statistic!

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**Received:** November 14, 2019; **Published:** December 05, 2019

**DOI:** 10.31080/ASNH.2020.04.0567

People feel good when they are counted among ladies or gentlemen of influence. There are many ways in which one can attain this recognition of which one may be positive or negative, productive or destructive. Human choices and decisions to a great extent determine not only our destiny but also our health. The choices people make each day, make them statistics for self-preservation or self-destruction. People make choices to live a healthy lifestyle through what they eat, drink or how much they are active. Feeling important through right doing entails purposing to stand out for your decisions or choices, such as being recognised in a family or community as someone who is disciplined, rational and health-conscious. Contemporary food and drinks industries are manufacturing a lot of products, and a good number of them fall on the unhealthy side. As rightly established by Stuckler, McKee, Ebrahim, and Basu (2012), unhealthy commodities, which include soft drinks and processed foods that are high in salt, fat, and sugar, as well as tobacco and alcohol are leading risk-factors for chronic noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) commonly referred to as diseases of affluence, but now a pandemic such high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, cancer, just to name a few. It is sad to notice that the consumption rate of unhealthy commodities, known as junk foods and drinks, has been rising rapidly in low- and middle-income countries (Chan, 2011). Studies carried out in different populations have established that avoiding the high fat, low fiber, high salt diets and sedentary modus vivendi in western societies will usually decrease the prevalence of chronic diseases.

Research further suggested that economic development has led to nutrition transition from under-nutrition to over-nutrition characterised by a change in food choices from traditional foods with low salt, less saturated fat, less energy dense to unhealthy, refined foods, sweetened, carbonated and energy drinks. Unfortunately, observations show that at times, poor eating habits among

impoverished groups may lead to intake of both inadequate nutritious foods and excess calories, thus making poor counted among overweight or obese.

Unhealthy food/ drinks products are manufactured because of they are lucrative from their low production cost, long shelf-life, and sale faster. However the future health costs are huge emanating from preventable lifestyle-related diseases. Stuckler, McKee, Ebrahim and Basu (2012) highlighted that the prevalence of unhealthy foods, drinks, alcohol and tobacco smoking is fastest in low- and middle-income countries at a pace that has never happened in high income countries.

Conglomerate companies have penetrated food manufacturing industry markets in middle- and low- income countries like the accomplishments in high income nations. The companies come through foreign direct investment, which has been seen to increase risks of rising unhealthy commodities among low- and middle-income nations. It is noteworthy that a sizeable number of middle- and high-income countries have kept an economic evolution without much consumption of unhealthy products. This suggests that domestic policy choices are paramount to mitigate future non-communicable diseases' risks. Furthermore, there is need that food and nutrition, dietetics as well as public health professionals decisively commit themselves to assist individuals, communities and governments to be counted among intelligent and wise consumers, who can demand foreign investors and local producers, healthy commodities. Intelligent consumers have the following characteristics: they seek reliable sources of information and are analytical about advertising claims, statements made by news media. Intelligent consumers know that new information, even when accurate, may be difficult to place in perspective without expert guidance such as from nutritionists or dietitians. Intelligent consumers maintain a

health lifestyle. This lessens the likelihood of becoming gravely ill and is very cost-effective. Informed consumers avoid tobacco products, eat/drink healthy products, exercise appropriately, maintain a reasonable weight, use alcohol moderately or not at all, and take appropriate safety precautions such as wearing a seat belt when driving. Wise consumers are not counted or statistics among people who do impulse buying or consume unhealthy products, which are deleterious to their health.

**Volume 4 Issue 1 January 2020**

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