

Americans flock to fast food like bees to honey. From drive-thrus to supermarkets, fast food is everywhere. As if pink slime and obesity weren't enough, here are more shocking ways fast food wreaks havoc on our health, animals, and the environment:

What are the effects of fast food on our health?

5 1. Depression

Studies show that piggin' out on junk food is directly linked to depression, even in small quantities. Affecting an estimated 121 million people worldwide, results reveal that consumers of fast food are 51 percent more likely to develop depression or some form of mental illness.

2. Premature Aging

- 10 Forget botox and ditch¹ the fast food instead. The sugars, trans fats, and starches found in fast food cause insulin levels to spike, triggering an inflammatory response in the body. This speeds the aging process and destroys the body's own natural age fighting antioxidants making you more prone to skin damage and premature aging.

...on animals?

15 3. Factory Farming

Most, if not all, meat, eggs, and dairy products used in fast food is produced at factory farms. In factory farms, animals are forced to endure inherently² cruel and inhumane conditions that deprive them of all their basic instincts.

4. Hormones

- 20 In efforts to make the fast food industry more profitable, animals are fed hormones that increase growth, milk, and egg production which can lead to painful inflammation, as well as crippling and debilitating conditions for poultry.

...on the environment?

5. Packaging

- 25 Fast food places use a heck of a lot of packaging. From the wrappers and straws to the boxes and bags, fast food packaging counts for an estimated 40 percent of all litter (including drinks, chips, candy, and other snacks) with Styrofoam being the most common food waste. What's more, Styrofoam takes an unbelievable 900 years to breakdown in landfill!

6. Greenhouse Gases

- 30 You probably wouldn't think of eating a Big Mac as contributing to your carbon footprint but the intensive resources required to make just a standard cheeseburger, from growing the wheat to make the buns to feeding the cattle, and eventually their slaughter³, and even the energy required to pickle the cucumbers, the resulting consumption is phenomenal converting to CO2 emissions of somewhere between 1 – 3.5 kg (and that's not taking into account the methane produced by the cow itself).

35 7. Water Contamination

Thanks to all the pathogens, hormones, drugs, and fertilizers that are used to produce fast food, seeping into our water supplies, water quality has suffered dramatically. Outbreaks of waterborne illness including E. Coli, marine life dead zones, and numerous other hazards⁴ can all be contributed to fast food.

In sum, as you can see, fast food is definitely far from the best choice for you, animals or the planet.

- 40 *So instead, opt for a home-prepared meal of locally-grown foods, for maximum resource reduction and the best health benefits, or, if you fancy an eat-out, choose more conscious eateries through a quick browse on Yelp, Happy Cow, or a humane eating app for suggestions prior to stepping out the door.*

To ditch¹ = to abandon ; inherently² = basically ; slaughter³ = massacre ; hazards⁴ = dangers

Comprehension

1. Look at the structure of the document. What type of text is it?

☐ a novel

☐ an article

☐ a review

2. Read the introduction. What is the main topic of the text?

3. How does fast food affect our body, animals and the environment? Fill in the grid and explain in your words.

	Effects
Human health / body	
Animals	
Environment	

4. Find the word in the text for:

 (§4)	 (§5)	 (§6)	 (§6)
 (§7)	 (§7)	 (§7)	 (§7)

5. Imagine a title for this document.