

Five surprising ingredients we unknowingly eat

While reading food labels is helpful for identifying what ingredients have gone into your food, there are some things you won't see listed on packages but which most of us eat every day.

Check out these five shocking things we unknowingly eat.

Arsenic

Many of us view rice as a pretty safe, healthy food; however, studies have suggested that it may also contain unsafe levels of the toxic substance arsenic. One study has suggested that one in five packs of American long-grain rice contain potentially harmful levels of the toxic substance, while others have reported concern for the levels of arsenic in rice milk and baby rice. In fact, according to tests by Consumer Reports, those who ate rice had 44 percent greater levels of arsenic in their bodies than those who had not. While there is relatively little risk of the odd bowl of rice causing any long lasting harm, the popular grain may be best enjoyed in moderation if reports are to be believed.

Insects

Most of us wouldn't class insects as a component of our diets; however, you may be eating more of them than you think, as well as your fair share of rodent hair over the years. Surprisingly, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allows for "natural defects" in food by permitting a certain amount of bugs and rodent hair to be present in food products. For example, chocolate products may contain an average of 60 insect fragments and one rodent hair per 100g, while citrus fruit juice can contain one maggot per 250ml.

Lead

Ladies, how often have you applied your lipstick in the morning only to find your glossy pout has faded within a matter of hours? While some of your makeup will inevitably smear off on objects throughout the day, apparently the average woman also eats a whopping four to nine pounds of lipstick in her lifetime! As a 2004 study revealed that up to 28 percent of lipsticks contains chemicals that can cause cancer and a 2007 study by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics found that more than 50 percent of lipstick brands contained lead, this may be bad news for our health. To cut down your consumption of lead and look after your health, try switching to natural, organic brands of lipstick.

Wood

From cooking utensils to tables and chairs, wood is an essential ingredient of many of our must-have items. However, did you know it is also a component of a large amount of the foods we eat? Cellulose (wood pulp) is increasingly added to processed foods to thicken foods, add texture and replace more expensive ingredients like flour and oil. While there are no reported health problems associated with consuming cellulose, it may come as a surprise to many that they are regularly splashing their cash on food products bulked out with wood.

48 teaspoons of sugar

While many of us make a conscious effort to limit the amount of sugar in our diets, research has shown that even if you steer clear of obvious sources of sugar such as desserts and chocolate, you may still be eating well over the recommended maximum sugar intake. According to a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, food companies have been increasing the sugar content of processed foods to make them more appetising, meaning that many are unaware of just how much they are eating. The study showed that some of us are unknowingly eating up to 46 teaspoons a day, increasing risk of health conditions including heart disease.