

# Healthy Muslim Guide

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says: "A strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than a weak believer, while there is good in both." Abu Hurayrah.

Volume I

Nutrition & Weight Loss

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# Table of Content

<b>Healthy Muslim Guide.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter I: Weight Loss &amp; Exercising .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Lose It the Right Way .....</b>	<b>9</b>
• Muslims and Weight Loss .....	9
• Best Weight Loss Plan for You.....	13
• Lose Weight, the Natural Way .....	20
• Results of Low-carb & Low-fat Diets .....	27
• Beating that Bulging Belly .....	33
• Journal of Herbalist: Eating Right.....	43
<b>Correct Your Common Mistakes .....</b>	<b>54</b>
• Ten Myths About Exercise .....	54
• Existence of Vegetarian Muslim.....	63
• Diet & Human Behavior: Is our Food to Blame? .....	71
• How to Naturally Detoxify Your Body? .....	81
• New Beginnings: Unraveling Weight Loss Dilemmas.....	89



**Chapter II: Healthy Food vs. Junk .....96**

**Unhealthy & You Know It .....98**

- **It's Called Junk and You Still Eat It ..... 98**
- **Will These Drinks Relax You? ..... 105**
- **Think Twice Before Drinking Diet..... 111**
- **High-Fructose Corn Syrup: An Ingredient to Avoid? ..... 118**
- **Supplements Are Not Necessarily the Answer ..... 123**
- **Vital Vitamins: Don't Let the Label Fool You ..... 129**
- **Can Stress Cause Weight Gain?..... 135**
- **Unwanted Relation between Stress & Big Belly ..... 143**

**References: ..... 148**

**Ask Your Doctor ..... 149**

- **Questions & Answers on Natural Health..... 150**
- **Let Them Eat Junk!..... 158**
- **The Golden Rule on Sweets! ..... 162**
- **How to Avoid the Charm of Junk Food Ads on Kids? ..... 166**



## Introduction

Praise be to Allah. We thank Him, the Most High, and seek His Help and Forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils within ourselves and that of bad deeds. He whom Allah guides, is truly guided, and whom Allah leaves to stray, none can guide him. We bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His final Prophet (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him). We ask Allah to bless our Prophet Muhammad, his family, his Companions, and all his followers, from the beginning of his call to the Day of Judgment.



Indeed, as narrated in the following Hadith, the greatest blessing after belief is health. The final messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad



(Peace and Blessings be Upon Him) mounted the pulpit, then wept and said, “Ask Allah (SWT) for forgiveness and health, for after being granted certainty, one is given nothing better than health.” (At-Tirmidhi).

From an Islamic perspective, health is viewed as one of the greatest blessings that Allah has bestowed on living organisms. Health is undoubtedly a favor that we take for granted. We should express gratitude to Allah for blessing us with health, and we are highly ordered to look after it. God has entrusted us with our bodies for a predestined period of time. He will hold us to account on how we looked after and utilised our bodies and good health.

Ibn Abbas has also narrated that Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) said: “There are two blessings which many people lose: (They are) health and free time for doing good.” (Al-Bukhari)

Furthermore, the importance of good health for a Muslim doesn't only stop at the stage of life we're currently living in *Dunya*, but we know that God will question us about that on the Day of Judgment. Narrated Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: “A man shall be asked concerning five things on the day of resurrection: concerning his life, how he spent it; concerning his youth, how he grew old; concerning his wealth, whence he acquired it, and in what

way he spent it; and what was it that he did with the knowledge that he had.”

Healthy living is part and parcel of Islam, introduced with the inception of Islam more than 14 centuries ago. Moreover, the Qur'an and the Sunnah outline the teachings that show every Muslim how to protect their health and live life in a state of purity.

In order for us to achieve this valuable goal, AboutIslam.net produced this book, whose contents are based mainly on articles and features provided by reputed doctors and health specialists, to help both Muslims and non-Muslims, understand the basics, rulings and guidance for healthy lives, God Willing.

We ask Allah Almighty to guide us all to what is best in this world and in the Hereafter, Ameen.



# Chapter I: Weight Loss & Exercising

- Lose it the Right Way.
- Correct Your Common Mistakes.



# Lose It the Right Way

## ■ Muslims and Weight Loss\*

An English proverb points out, "Some men walk through the forest yet see no firewood."

As Muslims, we should be careful of falling into this proverbial truth.

Muslims often seek outside help to lose weight, although the Qur'an and Hadith provide guidance on many ways through which we can combat being overweight. They include periodic cleansings, eating simple and whole foods and herbs, avoiding excess, drinking plenty of water, praying and seeking guidance from Allah, seeking the help of others, and being persistent and patient.



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\* By Karima Burns.



Ramadan is a time for physical cleansing as well as spiritual cleansing. A prophetic tradition (Hadith) states, "Fast the month of Ramadan so to heal your bodies from disease." If we strive to eat only pure, simple and light foods during Ramadan, we can undergo a physical as well as a spiritual cleansing. Since there is such a strong scientifically proven correlation between our spiritual, mental and physical health, to purify all systems at the same time provides the ultimate and most powerful detoxification fast that we have available today.

To eat purely means to eat the whole, unprocessed and pure foods that Allah has provided us such as whole wheat breads, grains, beans, vegetables and fresh fruits. These are perfect foods and we do not need to improve them with colors, chemicals and preservatives. The Qur'an (5:4) says, "They ask thee what is lawful to them as food. Say, 'Lawful unto you are all things good and pure.'" And (50:7), "And the earth we have spread out, and we have set firm mountains on it, and have made every kind of beautiful growth to grow on it."

The Qur'an also says (7:31), "Eat and drink, but waste not by excess for God loves not the prodigals." Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized this in Hadith when he mentioned that, "The stomach is the home of disease, and abstinence the head of every remedy. So make this your custom." It is easy to eat in excess since foods once reserved for royalty are now readily available in every supermarket. However, there is a hidden cost to excess consumption

that keeps them expensive. Livestock pay this hidden cost by being injected with hormones and chemicals to increase the production of meat, cheese, milk and cream. The earth pays an even higher price when we consider the amount of grain and water used to raise the excess number of cattle for meat consumption.

Eating breakfast is also an important part of weight loss as it speeds metabolism of the body. The Hadith say, "Eat your meal at dawn, for there is blessing in the meal at dawn," and, "There is blessing in three things: the early morning meal, bread and soup."

Also, we must not ignore the benefits of the many herbs that Allah has provided us. Sahih Al-Bukhari relates that, "For every malady Allah created, He also created its cure. Whoever acquires such knowledge shall benefit from it, and one who ignores it will forgo such benefit."

Another gift that Allah has given us in the battle against excess weight is water. The Qur'an says (15:45), "The righteous will be amid gardens and fountains of clear-flowing water," and (21:30), "We made water essential for all life." Muslims wanting to lose weight would benefit by drinking ten glasses of water a day, at least one half hour before and after meals.

As well as their spiritual benefits, the five prescribed daily prayers also provide physical toning benefits to the body. And patience is often the





greatest test we face when we decide to lose weight. However, the Qur'an says (2:155), "Give glad tidings to those who exercise patience when struck with adversity and say, 'Indeed, we belong to God, and to Him is our return.' Such ones receive blessings and mercy from their Lord, and such are the guided ones."

Lastly, we cannot forget the power of prayer and support from others. The Qur'an says (26:80), "... And when I sicken, then He (Allah) heals me." Abu Hurairah relates, "Allah never inflicts a disease unless he makes a cure for it." Weight gain is often caused by excess, and the weakness of one or more organs of the body. A Hadith even says, "The origin of every disease is cold. So eat when you desire and refrain when you desire." Many people have lost weight simply by warming up their bodies with herbs and warm foods, and reducing heavier, colder foods and those that clog and chill the system.

"Oh, Lord! Advance me in knowledge..." The Qur'an says, and the Prophet has stated, that we should, "Seek knowledge, even in China." Along these lines, we can also obtain wisdom from people all around the world in the subject of weight loss. Utilizing the support of programs such as Weight Watchers or information provided in magazines can be beneficial - as long as we turn to the Qur'an as our ultimate inspiration.



## ■ Best Weight Loss Plan for You\*

Today it seems that a female rite of passage is dieting. So much of a female's worth, right or wrong, is tied to how others perceive her and her own idea of body image. Let's face it; we all want to look and feel good about ourselves. Yet, many fad diets and diet drugs are life threatening.



Not too long ago, doctors would hand out Fen-phen (fenfluramine and phentermine) like candy to overweight patients, but it turned out that the deadly combination of pharmaceuticals had a high mortality attached to it. Also, caffeine containing diet pills can cause heart damage or failure.

As a species we never had such an obsession with diets as we do now and our ballooning waist lines in the West and amongst the affluent in the developing world, has made weight loss schemes a real money maker. In my private practice, I avoid the word diet. I refer to my

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\* By Anisa Abeytia.



approach on this topic as weight balance, because the word diet has become such a loaded word.

In an effort to unpack this word and to leave no room for ambiguity, I am going to define a diet as a whole system or way of eating. A diet can mean a Mediterranean diet, an Indian diet, or the Atkins diet. A diet is a whole approach to eating. A “diet” that consists of eating only grapefruits does not qualify as a diet, nor does a diet that causes disease like the Standard American Diet (SAD).

The guidelines of halal (permissible) and haram (impermissible) make for the most complete diet because it includes the clause “if it is harmful, it is not permissible.” Now that we are clear on what I mean by diet, it eliminates many outlandish diets like the grapefruit diet. But which is the best diet to follow for those who wish to lose weight? Vegetarian diets have become a popular choice. The Atkins diet, the low fat-low cholesterol diet, as well as Jenny Craig and Weight Watchers are also very popular.

### ***Vegetarianism***

Vegetarianism was started by Hindus as a religious practice. This is not to say that all Hindus are vegetarians. Today, it is mostly viewed as a political statement against the mistreatment of animals. As a diet, it does not sustain robust health. According to research published in

the *Journal of Applied Nutrition*, the vegetarians of Southern India have the shortest life spans on earth (Abrams). This is also not to say that vegetarianism is an unwise diet choice.

When someone comes to me and tells me they are a vegetarian, I really have to see what they are eating. Most of the time, they live mainly on pasta, bread, rice and baked goods. They rarely eat vegetables.

Humans are by design omnivores (both meat and plant eaters). We have teeth that imply both tearing (canines) and grinding (molars). Our one chambered stomachs are also designed for an omnivore's diet. Animals that chew the cud exclusively like cows, sheep and goats have two chambered stomachs.

Historically, humans have been primarily herbivores (plant eaters). There are instances of cultures living primarily on meat, milk and blood, such as Bedouins, the Massai of Africa and the Inuit tribes of the Arctic.

There has been no instance of a primarily vegetarian civilization, which was healthy. However, modern man consumes excessive amounts of animal flesh and that too is unhealthy. A balance and not extremes is what promotes health. If one wants to promote animal rights, eat less meat, buy it organic and hand slaughtered.



It must be said that a vegetarian diet is very effective in curing cancer. One of the side effects of over consumption of meat is that it creates an overly acidic environment in the body which cancer cells thrive in. A vegetarian diet helps alkalize the body, making it less hospitable for cancer. One must be careful to not be too alkaline because you run the risk of being a Petri dish for Candida, bacteria, viruses and other funguses.

### ***Atkin's Diet (Paleolithic Diet)***

Dr. Atkin's first proposed this diet in 1972. In the last two decades, it has increased in popularity and popularized the "carb sensitive" craze.

The diet emphasizes the consumption of proteins and vegetables and limits the amounts of grains and simple carbohydrates. This diet is also referred to as a Paleolithic diet because it closely mimics the way humans historically ate.

Consuming a diet that is rich in protein and fats does not mean the consumption of animal products. Beans, cheeses and milks are also good sources of protein. If you are concerned about your cholesterol, avoid animal products. Yet, just like the vegetarian diet, the Paleolithic diet has its place as well.

The Atkin's Diet is a building or anabolic diet, where vegetarianism is a cleansing or catabolic diet. This diet is useful for people recovering from an illness, children, post partum and during pregnancy. Also for people who are engaged in strenuous physical or mental activities (believe it or not, thinking requires a lot of food).

### ***The Low Fat/ Cholesterol Free Diets***

When it comes to diets the low fat diet is a novelty to human history. There are various examples around the world of societies who consumed large portions of animal fat without inducing coronary infarctions (heart attacks). The study of centenarians (people who live to 100 years or beyond) discovered that not only did fat comprise a large part of their diet, but so did cholesterol.

Historically, there are no examples of fat or cholesterol free societies. It is only modern man that has attempted such an experiment. There are various reasons for this. One of the very essential functions of cholesterol in the body is to produce sex hormones like estrogen and testosterone. When sex hormones are not produced in the correct amounts, sterility can be a result. Today in Western and Westernized societies we are witnessing a rise in infertility. A society that cannot procreate, doesn't survive.



Oddly enough, the body produces cholesterol; it is not solely obtained from food sources. Breast milk also contains large amounts of cholesterol. Cholesterol is essential to brain health and a lack of it can lead to depression and Alzheimer's. The use of cholesterol lowering statin drugs is marred by an excessively high incidence of Alzheimer's disease and cognitive dysfunction.

Not all fats are created equal. Some are harmful to us like canola oil (it is unstable and becomes rancid quickly) and hydrogenated oils (man-made oils that alter cell membrane structure). Others are healthful like olive oil, palm oil, ghee and coconut oil. Fats allow our bodies to absorb fat soluble vitamins like vitamins A, D and E.

### ***Weight Watchers/ Jenny Craig***

I do not want to go in-depth with these two popular diets because I believe they are of little value and can pose a health threat. But I do want to mention them because of their popularity.

When you are looking to lose weight, avoid the quick fix. I understand that there are events in our life for which we want to look our most radiant. However, this rapid approach to weight loss will only cause us to gain it all back again and we may even gain more weight than we lost. This approach is called yo-yo dieting. Another serious side effect

of a sudden decrease in caloric intake can be depression and cognitive problems.

These weight loss schemes may provide results in some instances, but it is seldom a long lasting reduction in weight. These programs induce weight loss by calorie reduction. Hence, if you eat less, you will lose weight. As long as someone can continue to keep their caloric intake lower than the amount of energy they are using, they will lose weight. This does not mean that calorie counting does not have a place in weight loss.

Nature finds balance, our modern diets have disturbed this balance and now we are suffering from infertility, depression and lifestyle diseases. May Allah bless you and your family with health, wealth and success in this life and in the next.

***This article was first published in 2003 and isn't meant to be a substitution for medical advice. You should never embark on a new diet without first consulting your physician or trained healthcare professional.***

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## ■ Lose Weight, the Natural Way\*

These days losing weight seems to be on everyone's mind, whether you want to lose a few pounds or are clinically obese.



Ads promoting fad diets or magic weight loss pills are everywhere. We are bombarded everyday with these ads on television, the internet and in our e-mail. But the real secret to weight loss is that the best weight loss program doesn't cost a thing and you do not need to starve yourself or even feel hungry. Natural weight loss is the best, healthiest and longest lasting weight loss method around.

AboutIslam.net (OI) conducted this interview with Anisa Abeytia, an integrative health specialist and Clinical Nutritionist, to discuss the best way to lose weight and how to make a few small changes to your lifestyle that will help you shed the pounds and keep them off for good.

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\* By Aisha El-Awady.



**OI:** If you were to suggest one food/drink to cut out of our diets in order to lose weight, what would it be?

**Abeytia:** Soda. One can of soda contains an average of 5 tablespoons of sugar and a host of artificial additives that can stress the liver and adrenal glands. Sugar promotes weight gain because it sets up a situation where blood sugar fluctuates all day. We can see this in the extreme with diabetic people who can gain excessive amounts of weight. When blood sugar spikes and falls several times a day, the body will hold onto fat because it thinks the body is starving.

**OI:** Are there any foods that can actually help weight loss?

**Abeytia:** I love coconut oil. It may seem like a strange thing to recommend, but I find that in my private practice that many people do not consume enough healthy lipids (fats). Currently consumption of corn and canola oil is excessive. It causes inflammation and is rancid (rotten). Hydrogenated oils are another health hazard and are really what gave saturated fats (solid at room temperature) a bad name. Hydrogenated oils do not occur in nature and there is some evidence that they alter the cell membrane by making it impermeable so waste cannot exit and nutrients cannot enter. This can lead to weight gain because it literally can get "stuck" in your body.



If you are interested in learning more about the role of fats in maintain weight balance, please visit the site for the Weston A Price Foundation or read the excellent books by Sally Fallon "Nourishing Traditions, Eat Fat Lose Fat" or Mary G. Enig "Know Your Fats, Eat Fat Lose Fat." A great website that discusses and gives recipes for foods great for losing weight and just being healthy, go to The World's Healthiest Foods website. There is also a companion book.

**OI:** We hear that nuts are high in calories but also high in nutrients. If a person is trying to lose weight, would you recommend that they consume nuts or cut them out of their diet due to their high calorie content?

**Abeytia:** Nuts are a wonderful food because they are filling and they are easy to take with you. A small amount can keep you full, so they offer more bang for their size. The problem that arises is when we over consume nuts. This is an easy thing to do when we do not have to shell them ourselves. A serving of nuts is one handful (your hand).

**OI:** For weight loss plans, are there any fruits or vegetables that you would recommend one NOT to eat?

**Abeytia:** Most people do not eat enough fruits or vegetables, period. Some vegetables that can cause problems are potatoes, peas and carrots eaten in excess, but when they are part of a balanced and

varied diet they are very nutritious. You want to purchase the most nutrient-dense foods you can buy. Organic foods usually have many more nutrients because the way the soil is maintained, but if it is coming from far away, like from Brazil to California or Florida to New York, the distance is too great and the food loses its nutrients. In that case you want to go for local, but be sure to wash your fruits and vegetables well. Keep in mind though that some pesticides do not wash off. There is a list you can find online titled "The Dirty Dozen." You want to purchase the fruits and vegetables on this list organic whenever possible.

Eating nutrient-rich foods is also a key to maintain proper weight balance. When we eat nutrient-dead food our bodies can become malnourished, even if we look over nourished, because our bodies are not receiving what they need. As a result, our bodies think we are starving so they hold onto calories instead of burning them, then we become fat, even though we are malnourished.

**OI:** What is the ideal amount of weight an overweight person should lose during a month's period that would allow him/her to keep the weight off for an extended period of time?

**Abeytia:** I have worked with people who lost 25 lbs (11.3 kg) in one month and that was healthy for them because it was an issue of inflammation or food sensitivities. Also people who are involved with



receiving different types of body work can also experience a large initial weigh loss in the first few months. I can recall one woman that I worked with using a body work I developed called Noor-al-Tawheed, who lost 3 lbs (1.4 kg) after two sessions (1 lb/0.45 kg a day for three days).

It is not about the amount of weight, but about making the appropriate lifestyle adjustments to allow your body to find the appropriate weight. Weight loss can be a tricky thing because so many factors come into it that it is easier and, yes, cheaper to work with a health care practitioner. Weight balance is more of a result of good health than anything else.

Now on the other hand, if someone is starving themselves by only eating grapefruits or by taking diuretics for short term weight loss, then that is dangerous. Fad diets that promise an amount of weight loss by limiting a food group can also be dangerous and not long term and typically the person gains all the weight back and more. These yo-yo diets are unhealthful. They can boast that you can lose 25 lbs in one month, but it is usually water weight that will all come back. If a person loses that much that quickly, I would suspect food allergies.

With all that said, 5-10 lbs (2.3 - 4.5 kg) is a "healthy" goal to set. You can also look at it from a prospective of inches. You might measure yourself at the chest, waist, hip, upper thigh and see how many inches

you lose as well. You may find that you lose inches before pounds. I have also noticed that some women experience a shift in where their excess weight is before they see a loss of any kind.

**OI:** What is the best food to start the day with for people trying to lose weight?

**Abeytia:** There is a great book titled "The Metabolic Typing Diet" by William L. Wolcott and Trish Fahey. Not everyone does great on a high protein diet and some people do great as vegetarians and have you ever wondered why? This book discusses why different eating styles work for different people and it has a very useful questionnaire to help determine what type you are. This is important to weight loss because if you are forcing someone to eat a salad for breakfast and they are starving in a few hours, the dietary habit is not working for that person. And it is not going to promote health.

Weight loss is a "side-effect" of good health. When your body receives what it needs, it tends to drop the pounds, sometimes effortlessly. The "perfect" meal for someone will vary, but what you do not want to eat is something sweet. Doctors of Traditional Chinese Medicine feel very strongly about this and it may have to do with insulin and the metabolic drag it exhibits on the body first thing in the morning. Now, the prophet (peace be upon him) did eat dates in the morning, but he combined it with water or milk, which would help counter the



sweetness. Also, dates are a whole food (they are not processed or have something added or removed) and are not like doughnuts, breakfast bars or breakfast candy (most breakfast cereals).

Starting your day with a metabolically appropriate meal can be the best gift you give to you and your family. When I work with someone, I find it very useful to do a complete metabolic profile.

## ■ Results of Low-carb & Low-fat Diets\*

The low-carb diet has certainly made its mark in the world. When it first made its premier, the low-carb diet was hailed as the cure for all those needing to lose weight.

It also rivaled what experts had told us in the past about the advantages of low-fat dieting. The end result explained that low-fat dieting might cause weight gain, while a low-carb diet will remove it. But at what cost?

Does limiting your carbohydrate intake really contribute to weight loss, and if so, why? Do all the experts agree with the diet, or is there opposition? Are there any nutritional risks with this type of dieting? Let's take a closer look.



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\* By Barbara J. Hunter.



## **Reducing Carbohydrates**

Although there are many low-carbohydrate diets, each professing to be better than the next, there is a unified opinion involved. In simplicity, experts agree that carbohydrates in excess “is the underlying cause of obesity.”

Furthermore, evidence supports the fact that an overindulgence in carbohydrates will lead to an overproduction of insulin, which in turn leads to an excess of body fat.

To understand the function of insulin in the body, author Laura Richards explains it has three primary roles. The first function is to assist the body’s cells in receiving glucose to maintain “biological functions.”

The second function of insulin is to keep the blood sugar balanced, and the third is that it aids in the storage of body fat. The process begins when carbohydrates are eaten.

It is realistic to say, and as Laura Richards concludes, “the greater the amount of carbohydrates we eat, the greater the amount of insulin we produce and the greater the amount of body fat we create.”



A further problem occurs inside the body when high insulin levels are present. A hormone produced by the pancreas, known as glucagon, will actually break down body fat.

There is a catch, of course. The pancreas will not release glucagon, or will only release it in small amounts if there is a continuous supply of glucose or insulin in the blood supply.

The ideal low-carb diet then theoretically lowers carbohydrate intake, which will reduce the insulin level and allow glucagon to be released, thus breaking down one's excess body fat.

## **Differences**

Most of the diets on the market agree that exercise is a benefit to any diet. Plenty of water is also necessary, and most diets recommend a minimum of eight 8-oz glasses for proper cell function. Each diet offers a guideline to what foods to restrict, and what others to include. For instance, Dr. Atkins recommends not using caffeine because it may induce high levels of insulin.

Ray Audette, the creator of the Neanderthin Diet, has his own "forbidden foods list" that includes sugar, beans, dairy, and grains. It is up to the dieter to decide which diet fits his needs and body type.



## **What to Expect**

Each person will lose weight in his or her own way. “For the most part, average reduced carbohydrate dieters can expect to lose no more than one to two pounds per week, or about 0.5 to 1 percent of their total body weight per week.”

Interestingly, the Atkins diet starts off by restricting carbohydrates for fourteen days, and is known as the “Induction diet.” Dieters are restricted to merely 20 grams of carbs a day, which really isn’t much.

“The goal of the induction phase is to quickly break carbohydrate addiction and interrupt the destructive cycle of excess insulin production.”

Amanda Pearson lost fifteen pounds in the first fourteen days on the Atkins diet. She explained that the weight loss was encouraging, and that she needed to make many changes to what she ate.

For instance, she switched to decaffeinated coffee and turned to Stevia, a natural sugar supplement, as an alternative to white sugar. Aside from dropping a size or two in her clothes, Amanda reported that the only side effect she experienced was hair loss, which she attributed to the accelerated weight loss.

## **Setbacks**

Everyone will react differently to a low-carb diet, but there are some setbacks to watch out for. Dieters experience periods of increased hunger and strong carbohydrate cravings. This can often work against those trying to maintain their diet.

Another setback of low- carb dieting is the use and support of artificial sugars, like NutraSweet, Aspartame, and Sorbital, which have been known to cause health problems. Also, those who have an under-active thyroid gland may experience slow weight loss, regardless of the method chosen.

## **Opposition**

A 2003 report released by the UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA) stated: "These diets [low-carb] usually involve cutting out starchy foods altogether. It's a common misconception that starchy foods are fattening- actually they contain less than half the calories of fat. And starchy foods are an essential part of a healthy balanced diet."

The report details the fact that by cutting out starchy food, a wide range of nutrients can be missed out on.

In addition, the report states, “Low-carbohydrate diets also restrict the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat, while these foods provide lots of different vitamins and minerals, as well as fiber, which are vital for good health.”

It is advised by the FSA that “eating plenty of fruits and vegetables can help prevent heart disease and some types of cancer.”

“Low carbohydrate diets tend to be high in fat, too, and eating a diet that is high in fat (especially saturated fat from foods such as meat, cheese, butter, and cakes) could increase your chances of developing coronary heart disease. High-fat diets are also associated with obesity.”

Although there seem to be many immediate benefits to the low-carb diet, there may be long-term health risks.

In the end, the key is balance. Eat a well-rounded nutritional diet, drink plenty of water, exercise, and get a proper amount of sleep.

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2. Richards, 25.
3. Richards, 112.
4. Food Standards Agency.

## ■ **Beating that Bulging Belly\***

Remember the time you looked in the mirror while brushing your teeth and realized that your belly was jiggling unusually?

That was probably the first time you noticed that your belly was starting to bulge a little, or a lot. That was, and usually is, also the time when you decided that you need to hit the gym again.



A large tummy, sometimes called a beer belly, is one form of obesity. It is a result of increased fat disposition in the belly area. This is more common in men than in women.

Women tend to have more fat in the hip and thigh areas. However, that doesn't mean that women cannot get beer bellies.

Losing the fat on the tummy is not just important for you to look good, but it is also important for you to be healthy.

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\* By Mohammed Yahia.



Obesity in general makes a person more susceptible to several diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. But localized obesity, such as beer bellies, makes a person even more susceptible to certain diseases.

### ***Fat Myths***

If you want to lose that extra fat on your tummy, you need to clear up some common misconceptions. First and foremost, there is no “magical pill” or “incredible device” that will allow you to burn the fat faster. It is a long process that requires commitment in order to achieve results.

The second thing to know is that no amount of sit-ups is going to make you lose the fat. You can be doing hundreds of sit-ups every day, but the end result will be rock-hard abs muscles hidden under layers and layers of fat. That isn't what we want to achieve. That isn't to say that exercise is not important, but alone, it isn't enough.

The only way to lose fat is to burn more energy than you are eating. That is the only time the body will tap into the energy stored in fat cells.

In order to achieve this, you will need to change several bad habits and make improvements to your lifestyle. If you can keep it up, you will be surprised at the positive results that a few small changes can achieve.

To make this task easier for you, here are several tips that you can follow to achieve the desired results.

### ***Watch What You Eat***

***Evade foods rich in fats.*** You should also decrease your total caloric intake because, as we mentioned before, if you do not burn more than you eat, then you will never lose any fatty cells.

***Try to divide your meals into five to six smaller meals instead of just three big ones.*** When the body does not receive food for prolonged periods, it enters into starvation mode.

During this period, all body functions drastically decrease caloric burning. The regular food intake will increase metabolism since the body will never enter into starvation mode. This will help burn more fat throughout the day.



Try to eat breakfast early, as soon as you wake up. This is to compensate for the long period of starvation while you are sleeping at night.

***Eat larger meals in the morning and smaller meals toward bedtime.*** This is important because the food eaten in the morning will be used throughout the day to generate energy.

However, if you eat heavy meals in the evening then most of it will be stored as fat while you are sleeping since it is not used up.

***Cut down on junk food.*** Switch to nutritious, healthy foods. Junk food is one of the leading causes of obesity around the world. Also, try to cut down on refined sugars and processed food.

You also need to develop the most important habit; stop eating when you are full. Don't overeat and stuff yourself. It is unhealthy, increases the fats in your body, and gives you stomachaches!

### ***Watch What You Drink***

***Quit drinking beer.*** If you drink alcohol, now would be a great time to quit. There is, after all, a reason belly fat is called a "beer belly." There is no clear understanding of how beer can increase fat around the tummy.



However, most doctors agree there is a strong relationship between drinking beer and increased belly fat. This could be due to the fact that beer is very high on caloric value.

***Do not drink soft drinks either.*** They have a caloric value of around 150 per can. Count how many you drink every week, do the math, and you will realize they add up to thousands of calories.

Diet soft drinks, while low on calories, have other health problems. It is best to evade them altogether. Go for fresh juices instead. They taste great and are a much healthier option. They act as a fun and filling snack between meals.

***Try to drink a lot of water throughout the day,*** especially when you wake up and before you sleep. Water is king. That is the golden rule. Water helps streamline the fat burning process as well as detoxify the body.

If your body is low on water at anytime during the day, the body reduces energy burning. This translates into lower fat loss. If you are exercising, make sure you are well hydrated because you will lose a lot of water to sweat.

***Try green tea.*** Green tea is also a great substitute for coffee or black tea. It is rich in substances called catechins.

A study published in 2005 in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* indicates that catechins may trigger weight loss by stimulating the body to burn calories and decreasing body fat. Green tea also has antioxidant, antiviral, and anticancer properties.

### ***Implement Activity Into Your Life***

***Try to take the stairs rather than the elevator or escalator.*** Think of it as an exercise that needs neither special equipment nor dedicated time.

***Get in the habit of a brisk walk every day,*** may be by parking your car a few blocks away from work in the morning. If you usually take public transportation, get off a station or two away from your target and walk the remaining distance.

Besides being refreshing, it will burn some energy. Coupled with lower calories intake, this will lead the body to burn fat cells.

### ***Exercise the Right Way***

As mentioned before, sit-ups and crouches are the biggest belly fat loss myth. To lose fat, you have to work up a sweat.

Cardiovascular exercises, also called aerobic exercises, are the best way to do that. These include a vast array of workouts such as running, power walking, swimming, cycling, and rope jumping.

There are also trendy new options such as aerobic dancing, which can be fun and exciting besides helping you lose weight.

Most experts recommend aerobic exercising for 20 to 50 minutes three to five times a week. Besides raising your metabolism, and thus burning more calories to release energy, cardio exercises have great health benefits such as reducing cardiovascular diseases, which is the leading cause of death around the world.

Anaerobic exercises, such as weight-lifting, can have a beneficial effect by raising your basal metabolic rate (BMR).

Simply put, this refers to the amount of energy your body burns when not exercising to maintain its functions. Anaerobic exercises increase your muscle mass, which require more energy uptake.

Raising your BMR means that your body will constantly be burning more calories, leading to reduce fat deposits all over.



***Activate your core.*** This term refers to one of the most effective yet simple ways of having a flat tummy. All you have to do is draw your bellybutton into your spine and hold it there while breathing naturally. See how long you can hold, and try to better your time every day. The best thing about this is that you can do it while sitting at your computer, standing, or walking. Try to set alarms on your computer or phone several times throughout the day to remind you to “activate your core.”

### ***Mental State***

While this may all sound too overwhelming, it is not impossible to be able to achieve these changes in your lifestyle if you have the right mindset. By time, you will be able to naturally know what foods are not good for you. Even better, you will not be craving them anymore.

Incorporating exercise into our busy lifestyles can be tricky. But if you try to make exercise a fun family activity, or a friends get-together activity, then it will be much easier to maintain on the long run.

And the secret lies in the idea of the long run. You have to take the decision that losing belly fat is going to take time. There is no easy way or shortcut.

However, the gradual change in your life will ensure that you are able to keep your new lifestyle. And this will eventually improve the quality of life for you.

And in less than 10 weeks, you are bound to see signs of your stomach fat receding. And you will be wearing those clothes that you stuffed in the back of the closet in no time!

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***This article was first published in 2007 and is currently republished for its informative content.***

## ■ Journal of Herbalist: Eating Right\*

**Case:** Talla came to me for a dietary program. She felt she needed to eat healthier but she did not know where to start, what to change or what to do. She wanted to lose about twenty pounds, feel more energetic and sleep better at night. She was sure her present manner of eating had something to do with her odd energy levels.



I suggested to Talla something that I suggest to many of my clients – that she start with a detoxification program to cleanse her body and then ease back into a healthier way of eating.

I started her program with a ten-day detoxification program of neutral/non-allergenic foods to give her body a chance to reach a stressless state and to allow the detoxification herbs I would give her to work more effectively.

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\* By Karima Burns.



The diet she was to eat for the next ten days consisted only of vegetables of all kinds, fish excluding shellfish and clams, apples, brown rice, and green herbs such as mint, parsley and coriander.

She was also allowed small amounts of olive oil and salt with her cooking but wasn't allowed to drink anything but water, wasn't allowed any grains other than brown rice and wasn't allowed any fruit except apples.

The detoxification tea I gave Talla was a traditional Spring Cleansing tea that has been popular since the Renaissance in Europe, the Middle East and America.

It is commonly known as root beer and was traditionally a carbonated, non-alcoholic beverage made from detoxifying roots grown in the area of consumption. The modern version contains no herbs, just flavorings and colors.

However, attendees of any renaissance festivals can still enjoy the real thing. Root beer was used as a yearly cleansing tea because its various ingredients target all the organs of the body from the liver to the spleen to the circulatory system and cleanse the entire system intensely and effectively.



For the reason of its strength I usually don't recommend more than a glass or two of real root beer to children or people taking medications. I also don't advice people who are feeling weak or underweight to use it.

However, Talla was healthy in general despite her energy level problems and was not taking any medication so I gave her the recipe for root beer and a mixture of the herbs. I also modified the recipe a bit to accommodate female needs. Many traditional root beer mixtures are geared towards a male audience.

### **Women's Root-Beer Cleansing Tea**

Also great for endocrine glands, liver, and hormone production: 3 parts sassafras bark. 2 parts dandelion root. 1 part licorice root. 1 part pau d'arco. 1 part vitex. 1 part wild yam. 1 part ginger root. 1/2 part cinnamon. 1/4 part orange peel. 1/4 part dong quai root.

To make the root beer add one teaspoon of herb per cup of water and simmer it for twenty minutes. Strain and add honey to taste. Don't over simmer, boil or add too many herbs as it will become bitter. If it is still to strong you may add some water to weaken the tea.

Talla was happy with the herbs but was concerned about the detoxification. She told me that she did not have enough time to cook



all those vegetables and that was one reason why she didn't eat healthy to begin with.

"I don't have enough time to eat healthy," she said, "and how will I find time to cook all that food?" I explained that the concept of healthy eating being difficult was a concept propagated by advertisers of special programs and publishers of exotic or prolific vegetarian cookbooks.

With all the hype over vegetarian cooking and the introduction of the gourmet vegetarian restaurant we have come to associate vegetarian with gourmet and we automatically assume that it will involve a lot of work.

However, eating healthy or eating a lot of vegetables doesn't have to be hard work as long as you can plan well and learn to be creatively simple with your meals.

I shared with Talla some of my basic formulas for cooking interesting and healthy vegetable dishes (below) as well as some of the methods I used to keep healthy food available.

She would not be able to use all of my ideas during the detox, however, she could use many of them afterwards as she tried to ease

into a healthier way of eating. I gave her the following list of kitchen organization ideas:

**1. Use the bread machine to create healthy breads and rolls for the family.**

The way to keep this simple and easy is to experiment to find a recipe that pleases you and then use the same recipe every time you make bread but just change the flours for variety. Set the bread machine for dough only. When it is done in an hour and a half shape the bread into loaves or rolls and bake them.

This is something one can do upon first waking up, before going to the grocery store, or even at night as long as the recipe is egg-free. Using the bread machine to make only dough doesn't require precise measuring so one can vary the flours used and add anything from buckwheat to spelt to oatmeal.

In the end, more flour can be added if needed. Dough can also be shaped into pita loaves or used as pizza dough. For a healthy snack dough can be filled or topped with ingredients such as zatar and oil or cheese and chives.

**2. Buy a divided tray for quick snacks.**



A divided tray with a lid is a staple part of my kitchen. I have eight of them. Each tray has six sections and a lid.

One tray is filled with various dried fruits, one is filled with six kinds of healthy seeds and nuts including pumkin and melon seeds and one tray is filled with juice-sweetened jams and homemade nut butters (put some nuts in a blender with a little olive oil) to spread on breads.

In another tray I keep baby carrots and baby tomatoes (because they don't involve cutting, they always taste sweet and they last a long time in the tray) as well as cut up cucumbers, olives, pickles, and some alfalfa sprouts.

All of the above mentioned trays are very easy to prepare and if one really wanted to they could eat only the food in those trays and be full every day with healthy food. The other two trays I have taken a little more effort but last for up to three days in the refrigerator and are worth the fifteen minutes of invested time to prepare them.

The first tray is a tray filled with cut up melons, sectioned oranges, pineapple, mango, grapes, berries and/or whatever is in season. I keep bananas and apples in a basket on the counter on a daily basis. The second tray is filled with cauliflower, broccoli, celery, radishes, and other vegetables that take some time to peel and prepare.

These trays provide the cornerstone for all meals and snacks. At breakfast the fruit and jam tray are always out. For dinner and lunch the vegetable trays come out. Rotating the variety in the tray keeps up the interest level and the maintenance of the trays takes only about ten minutes a day or a half hour twice a week.

### **3. Use a crock-pot.**

I am surprised how many people do not use a crock-pot. A crock-pot is basically the electronic version of the traditional pot simmering over the open fire in a traditional village. One adds the ingredients to the pot in the morning, lets them simmer unsupervised to exquisite tenderness all day and then enjoys the meal in the evening.

This takes only minimal planning but the rewards are less time cooking, healthier foods and better and more frequent home cooked meals. The basic recipe for any crock-pot is simple: add vegetables, and/or meats, and/or pre-soaked beans until the pot is three-fourths full. Top these ingredients with a spice mixture and 3-8 cups of water, tomato sauce, or stock.

In 4-8 hours you have dinner or lunch to be served alongside vegetables and homemade bread. I often make traditional Indian or Middle Eastern dishes in the crock-pot as well.



Bisillah or Fusulia or any number of curries or dhals can be made in the crock-pot. If too much liquid is in the final dish the crock-pot can be left to simmer on high with the lid off for an hour or two to finish the dish.

#### **4. Use creativity.**

Sometimes just thinking in a creative and simple way can help you create simple dishes. My favorite two dishes are hummus wrap-ups and squash bowls. The recipes are simple and easy and very healthy. Don't think that to make a healthy dish you have to use a lot of ingredients. Some of the best dishes use only two or three ingredients.

#### **Hummus Wrap-ups**

Spread hummus on a thin piece of wrap-up bread (purchase from the store) or pita bread. Add lettuce and tomato and some garlic and roll it up.

#### **Squash Bowls**

Cut a squash in half and hollow it out. Poke holes in it with a fork and put it in the stove for 40 minutes. Meanwhile stir-fry some sliced onion, green pepper, garlic, raisins, and pine nuts in olive oil. Fill the squash with the stir-fry mixture.

Talla was very excited to try the new ideas I gave her. She had a successful detoxification week and found it much easier to eat healthy food with the ideas I had given her.

Her closing comments to me were, “I never knew it was so easy to eat healthy! It’s actually easier than all the fast food and prepared foods I was making before. It’s easier than Hamburger Helper!”

### **Here are some of the basic formulas I gave Talla:**

#### General Formula for Cooking Interesting Vegetable Dishes

1. Chop, slice or julienne any vegetables you have around that seem to go together. This can be a combination of fresh and frozen.
2. Chose a cooking method (stir fry, steam, baked or raw)
3. Chose a spice theme (Mexican, Italian, Greek, etc...)
4. Chose an oil, sauce, or stock base (this can be olive oil, butter, ghee, tomato sauce or even vegetable broth)

#### **Stir Fry**

1 tsp. of oil. 1/2 tsp. of salt. 1 onion and some garlic. Sauté these in the oil and then add the spice mix for your “national flavor”. Add vegetables and sauté until cooked but not wilted.



### **Baked Vegetable**

1 tsp. of oil. 1/2 tsp. of salt. onion and garlic. Sauté the above. Add the vegetables and 2-3 cups of vegetable stock and spices. Bake for 1 hour in a covered dish. When finished pour off the liquid into a sauce pan. Add a little cornstarch with cold water to the saucepan to make a thick “gravy” for the veggies.

### **Stuffed Veggies**

Use any of the leftovers from the methods above to stuff baked squash, potatoes, or yams. You can also steam green peppers or tomatoes and stuff those.

### **Interest**

You can add up to 2 TBS. of nuts and/or raisins (sultanas) to your dishes to make them more interesting.

### **My Favorite Combinations**

(You can and should add chopped greens to any of these if you like)

1. Broccoli, cauliflower and red pepper with Italian seasoning
2. Zucchini, tomato, peppers, green beans, eggplant and mushrooms with Italian seasoning
3. Zucchini, corn, tomato, mushrooms, pimentos, red peppers, green peppers and yellow peppers with Mexican seasoning



4. Baby corn, peas (snow peas if you can find), mushrooms, greens, sprouts, broccoli, peppers, and carrots with Oriental seasoning
5. Green peppers, celery, onions, greens, walnuts and raisins stuffed in squash
6. Peas and carrots in tomato sauce with Middle Eastern seasoning

You can find many websites and books that publish the ingredients for everything from Mexican to Middle Eastern seasonings to curries. You don't need to purchase these prepared. However, I do keep a list of spice recipes near my spice cupboard.



# Correct Your Common Mistakes

## ■ Ten Myths About Exercise\*

One of the longest and toughest battles in history was the Battle of the Bulge. The daily battle against bulging body forms is not less hard, if not as bloody.

Many people are getting increasingly obese, and obesity is stepping in early nowadays.



Before, women used to lose their figure after their first or second baby. Men used to develop beer bellies or become obese due to

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\* By Deepa Kandaswamy.

inactivity. Nowadays, however, obesity develops at a young age, as young as 10 sometimes.

Increasingly, kids are taking to junk food and television dinners, and they rarely play in the evenings — unless it is computer games. As for today's adults, both men and women lose their health and shape due to overwork.

The worst jobs are desk jobs, such as working in administrative, IT, and customer service positions. This has become a form of occupational hazard.

Do you know people can gain weight if they continuously miss on sleep? According to a University of Chicago research study by Eva Van Cauter and her team, which appeared in the medical journal, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, sleep deficiency causes a fall in secretion of a hormone called leptin and an increase in another called ghrelin.

Leptin is responsible for telling the brain that a person is full and doesn't need to eat. Ghrelin is the hormone responsible for triggering hunger. The decrease in leptin and increase in ghrelin together cause a person to crave food even when the body doesn't really need it.

They also tell the body to store the extra calories eaten for later use. No wonder obesity starts early and is on the rise!



One of my cousins was stuck in an executive job that required her to be seated for over nine hours a day. She decided that the easiest way to lose weight was to skip breakfast and go jogging two kilometers on the beach early in the morning everyday.

As a result, she would end up eating a bigger lunch than she used to eat before she started her “lose weight” program. After a month of this, she not only gained weight but also stopped jogging because she decided exercise was useless!

Starving yourself or skipping a meal is neither practical nor sensible. Many people cringe at the thought of dieting and exercise.

This is either because they don’t understand what it means or because they take drastic measures when they decide to lose weight. Some fitness fiction like “no pain, no gain” still exist to this day.

In addition, there is a constant background of products that advertise losing weight on television, such as miraculous drinks for a slimmer body in 10 days and other similar outrageous product promises. People buy these due to a lot of popular misconceptions that are still widely prevalent.

Here are 10 of the common myths about exercise as well as the not-so-commonly-known facts based on current exercise research.

### **Myth #1**

Like all the different results which one can get from exercising, weight gain or weight loss is due to many factors. These can range from food intake and dietary programs to genetics. Not all individuals will lose the same amount of weight on the same exercise program.

In fact, it is possible to be active and overweight! So if you are active and still overweight, don't lose hope. Exercise being the only sure way to lose all the weight you want is a myth. While exercise alone cannot guarantee you ideal weight, regular physical activity is one of the most important factors in building up stamina and in the long term helps with reducing weight.

### **Myth #2**

**You Burn More Fat by Exercising Regularly at High Intensity**

The most important aspect in exercise isn't how fast or vigorous the workout is but rather how much calories are burned during an activity. While it is true that you burn more calories by running, walking, or stepping quickly, it is often not possible to sustain the pace of a high-intensity exercise routine. This is the reason why most people give up



their fitness programs after eagerly joining the local gym. It is trying to do too much too fast. It is safer and more practical to exercise longer at a lower intensity, especially when you are starting out or returning to your exercise routine.

### **Myth #3**

**Exercise Is a Waste of Time If Not Done Regularly.**

This kind of thinking keeps people away from even starting an exercise routine or joining an exercise program. Research continues to show that a little exercise is better than no exercise at all. Therefore, if you missed some days of your exercise program, don't give up but rather go back to it. So, exercise whenever you find the time, or try to do it by not using the usual gadgets. Go over to the television and try to manually change the channel each time instead of using the remote control. Walk over to the telephone instead of picking up the cordless phone. Don't get into your car to visit your neighbor who lives down the street, take a refreshing walk instead.

### **Myth #4**

**Overweight People Are Unlikely to Benefit Much From Exercise**

This myth discourages many obese people from ever getting into an exercise routine because there is way too much fat to get rid of. The truth is both men and women of all different sizes and weights can

improve their fitness levels with modest increases in activity or exercise. Studies have repeatedly showed that obese people who participate in regular exercise programs have a lower risk of mortality than lazy individuals, irrespective of weight. (EuroAspire Study Group)

### **Myth #5**

Yoga is an ancient Indian discipline. It is an excellent exercise system and has huge benefits due to its holistic nature. However, some *asanas*, or poses, are quite rigorous and demanding, both physically and mentally. As with any form of exercise, a qualified instructor and close supervision are essential for a safe and effective workout. It is true that yoga is a safe program but not without a yoga master. One can't perform all the *asanas* just by watching the video instructions on the yoga DVD. Therefore, try not to undertake yoga on your own without supervision.

### **Myth #6**

#### **Only Gym Workouts Help Reduce Weight**

Despite all the hype about the gadgets, trendy exercise facilities and routines, it isn't true that you will lose weight only if you go to the gym. Research shows you lose weight if you perform an exercise routine consistently. For most people, home-based workouts are fine



as they are easier to stick to, rather than a trip to the local gym. The keyword is “consistently.” The location is irrelevant.

### **Myth #7**

#### Benefits of Mind-Body Programs Are Questionable

A research study by Dr. Michael Irwin published at Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, University of California, Los Angeles, shows that the health benefits of mind-body programs Tai Chi and Yoga continues to grow. Tai Chi, for example, has been shown to treat lower back pain. Yoga has been shown to cure asthma and other diseases. Both these routines result in improved flexibility, balance, co-ordination, posture, and strength. They can also reduce stress and promote weight loss.

### **Myth #8**

#### Water Fitness Programs Are Only for Older People or Those with Disabilities

A research published in *American Fitness* magazine shows that water fitness programs can be highly challenging and effective for both improving fitness and losing weight. Nowadays, even top athletes, such as Olympic gold medalist Carl Lewis, integrate water fitness programs in their training workouts.



## Myth #9

Be Critical of Yourself.

This isn't just a myth but also a very bad idea. It is easy to get skeptical and critical if you don't see immediate results in your exercise program. Weight loss varies from one individual to the other. Fitness experts all over the world are now saying that weight loss largely depends on one's Resting Metabolic Rate (RMR) which is the rate at which the body burns calories while not exercising. RMR varies greatly from one person to another and depends on genetic factors. This is why some people lose the first few pounds quickly, then take a lot of time losing the rest while others take forever to lose the first pounds and then lose the rest quickly.

Some others experience weight loss at a steady rate. So when you are on an exercise routine, remember your goal is long term and the weight loss is mostly related to genetics. Don't be critical of yourself if you don't lose your weight immediately. Instead, be supportive of yourself and reassure yourself each time you're doubtful. Hard work always pays the dividends in the long run and it is no different in exercise.

## Myth #10



Most people treat themselves if they achieve a particular weight on the scales. According to IDEA Health and Fitness Association, this is the wrong way to go about rewarding yourself. Experts suggest instead of rewarding yourself for the pounds lost, it is important to reward yourself for the positive changes you make in your behavior. This reward system won't only make you feel good about losing weight but will also help you continue to regularly exercise, even after you have reached the desired number on the scale.

Now that you have learnt the myths, what are you waiting for? Stop counting the calories and weighing yourself every couple of hours. Stop following the latest fad diet. Don't buy one of those "lose weight without exercise" quick fix gadgets they advertise on television. Watch what you eat, sleep eight hours a day, and exercise everyday, at least a little each day.

***Editor's Note: This article was first published in 2009 and is currently republished for its importance.***

## ■ Existence of Vegetarian Muslim\*

The Prophet (SAW) said, “The superiority of ‘Aisha to other ladies is like the superiority of Tharid (i.e., a meat and bread dish) to other meals.”

When one first reads the above Hadith, it appears to be non-controversial and simply stated to honor a strong and blessed Muslim woman.

However, a vegetarian reading it might have trouble accepting the fact that the Prophet himself (SAW) elevated a meat dish to such a high rank among foods.

On the other hand, vegetarians would be pleased with a Hadith related by Yahya that states that the Prophet (SAW) said, “Beware of meat. It has addictiveness like the addictiveness of wine” (Malik).

In this Hadith, it seems that meat doesn’t hold such a high rank, after all; rather, it appears to be among the worst foods we can consume.



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\* By Karima Burns.



So what is the correct perspective regarding meat in Islam? Should Muslims be vegetarians, carnivores, or omnivores?

In the argument for meat, one must note that the Prophet (SAW) himself ate meat; he condoned and even encouraged eating it; and Allah has required sacrificing at the time of Eid-ul-Adha for the purpose of consumption.

The Prophet even considered meat “clean” that, according to the narration of Ibn Abbas, “The Prophet (SAW) ate of the meat of a shoulder (by cutting the meat with his teeth), and then got up and offered the prayer without performing the ablution anew” (Bukhari). It was also one of the favored foods to be taken on journeys. Jabir bin ‘Abdullah narrates, “During the life time of the Prophet, we used to take the meat of sacrificed animals (as journey food) to Medina” (Bukhari, Hadith No. 474, Vol. 7).

As well, according to the narration of Aisha, meat was also a favored gift. “I never felt so jealous of any woman as I did of Khadija, though she had died three years before the Prophet married me, and that was because I heard him mentioning her too often, and because his Lord had ordered him to give her the glad tidings that she would have a palace in Paradise, made of Qasab, and because he used to slaughter a sheep and distribute its meat among her friends” (Bukhari).

### ***Modern Science Says***

Modern researchers have also begun to favor meat again as an important part of the diet. For years, it was unpopular within the health industry after it was found to contain fats that potentially cause heart disease and obesity, and a structure that requires a longer digestive time and causes constipation and increased body toxicity.

However, many experts have now concluded that some vitamins and minerals can only be found sufficiently in meat products, and that most vegetarians will become deficient in these nutrients over time.

Hence, a recent article in Prevention magazine asks, “Does this latest swing back to red meat mean that we’re heading straight for imminent health disaster?” Their answer was, “Not at all.

In moderation, lean meats can provide significant health benefits, from preventing vitamin and mineral deficiencies and boosting immunity to building stronger blood.”

In fact, meat does provide many health benefits. Dr. Susan Kleiner, R.D, PhD. and owner of High Performance Nutrition in Mercer Island, Washington says, “People read reports that red meat causes cancer and heart disease so they think they have to stop eating meat.



What they don't realize is that people in these studies eat more than ten ounces a day. Eating three to five ounces a day is considered quite healthful."

One of the most important nutrients found in abundance in meat is iron – a mineral that boosts the oxygen carrying capacity of blood. Without enough iron, our red blood cells get smaller and we start feeling worn out. Women and athletes are even more at risk for iron deficient anemia, because their bodies use more iron due to menstruation and exercise.

In one study, 47 inactive women were enrolled in a 12-week moderate aerobics program. After the 12 weeks, their iron levels showed a significant drop. This could explain why some people who exercise complain that they still feel fatigued even though they "should" feel more energetic from their efforts.

Iron is also found in abundance in dark leafy greens such as spinach or Swiss chard; however, it takes about five cups of uncooked Swiss chard or spinach to equal the iron found in 10 ounces of meat. Realistically, even a person who is willing to eat five cups of greens in a day would not find them available year round, particularly during the winter.

Furthermore, meats contain an iron called heme iron which is fifteen percent more absorbable than non-heme (plant) iron. And consuming heme iron actually helps the absorption of non-heme iron; therefore, it is a good idea to combine foods from the plant and animal kingdoms for the best balance and benefit.

To compensate for the deficiency of iron in vegetarian and low meat diets, many people take iron supplements. However, it has been found that consuming many of these supplements can actually be detrimental rather than helpful because most are made from a non-organic iron which is not absorbable by the body, but instead forms deposits over time, which can lead to an increased risk of infections, heart disease and cancer.

Zinc, responsible for supporting the immune system, is another mineral found abundantly in meat. A three-ounce top round, for instance, provides one third of the USRDA (U.S. Recommended Daily Allowance) for zinc, which like iron is more easily absorbable coming from meat than vegetable sources.

However, unlike iron, it is not readily available within the plant kingdom. One would have a hard time getting enough zinc in a strictly vegetarian diet unless they were to consume a few cups of pumpkin seeds every day. Therefore, a person who never eats meat would soon become deficient in zinc.



### ***Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>***

Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is perhaps the most difficult to obtain nutrient that meat provides, as it is virtually unavailable in the plant kingdom at all. In fact, most doctors recommend that vegans (those that do not eat meat products at all) absolutely need to take a vitamin B<sub>12</sub> supplement.

Doctors have noted that many vegetarians feel “fine” for years; then, five or seven years down the road, they suddenly feel fatigued. Strict vegetarians are at high risk for developing “pernicious anemia,” a rare and often fatal disorder resulting from a depletion of B<sub>12</sub> in the system.

This is because vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, which is stored in the liver, depletes itself over time. Most people who include at least some meat products in their diet, however, will never have this problem. Therefore, most experts advise eating meat at least occasionally in the vegetarian diet.

This view syncs well with the example of the Prophet (SAW). The Qur’an (7:31) says, “Eat and drink, but waste not by excess, for God loves not the prodigals.” Muhammad (SAW) elaborated on this verse when he said (narrated by Yahya), “What is this, Amir al-muminin?” “We desired meat and I bought some meat for a dirham,” Umar said.



“Does one of you want to fill his belly apart from his neighbor or nephew? How can you overlook this ayat: ‘You squandered your good things in the life of this world and sought comfort in them’ ” (Qur’an, 46:20).

In this Hadith, the Prophet (SAW) seems to imply that eating meat in excess is an act of selfishness, and that one should feed any extra meat that they might have to someone who is in need.

Concern for animals prompts many people to be vegetarian. That we should be concerned about animals is obvious in a famous Hadith narrated by Bukhari: Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet said, “A man felt very thirsty while he was on the way; there, he came across a well.

He went down the well, quenched his thirst, and came out. Meanwhile, he saw a dog panting and licking mud because of excessive thirst. He said to himself, ‘This dog is suffering from thirst as I did.’ So, he went down the well again and filled his shoe with water and watered it.

Allah thanked him for that deed and forgave him.” The people said, “O Allah’s Apostle! Is there a reward for us in serving the animals?” He replied: “Yes, there is a reward for serving any animate (living being).”



Another Hadith that encourages kind treatment toward animals is that related by Malik that states, “Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, is kind and loves kindness.” We are encouraged to be mild towards animals – even “beasts of burden” which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to spare from traveling through difficult terrain.

Despite these and numerous other Hadith enumerating the virtues of kindness towards animals, it doesn’t follow that they should not be slaughtered. Not only is it permissible for our lawful use, it is also permissible to kill an animal as a protection against danger or evil.

Aisha narrated that Allah’s Apostle said, “Five kinds of animals are harmful and can be killed in the Haram (Sanctuary). These are the crow, the kite, the scorpion, the mouse and the rabid dog.”

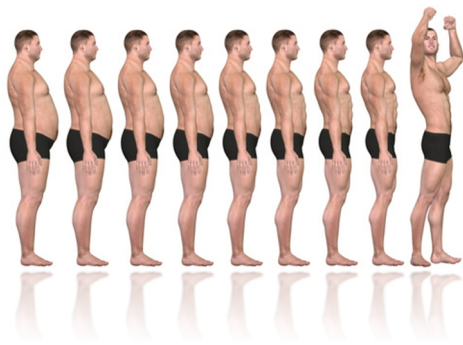
The general consensus, amongst the Prophet and modern health experts, is that we should eat meat – at least in moderation – and, while it certainly can become “as addictive as wine,” it holds a high rank amongst foods as long as it is eaten in moderation.

Therefore, we can conclude that the best health is enjoyed by those who “Eat of the good things We have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess therein” (Qur’an, 20:81).

***This article was first published in 2009 and is currently republished for its importance.***

## ■ Diet & Human Behavior: Is our Food to Blame?\*

When young adult prisoners' diet was supplemented with multivitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids, researchers noticed a striking reduction in their anti-social behavior, violence and aggression [1].



When school children with ADHD showing no improvement on standard drug treatment, received essential fatty acids daily for six months, parents reported significant improvement in “restlessness, aggressiveness, completing work, and academic performance”[2].

And, when 95 British middle managers were given dietary supplements to compensate for missing nutrients in their diet, after eight weeks, significant improvement in activity, mood, cognitive and behavioral strain, and stress management was recorded[3].

A closer look at those above examples shows us a staggering pattern that is recurrent in our everyday life: teenager and young adult

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\* By Amira Ayad.



violence and aggressiveness; school children hyperactivity, restlessness and poor academic performance; and, managers and employees stress, mood disturbance and lack of motivation.

No one can deny that those behaviors are complex psychological and social problems that should be addressed from more than one perspective. Yet sometimes, the answer, or at least an important part of it, is closer than we could imagine: Our diet!

More and more studies are pointing at the importance of proper nutrients consumption for mental, social and cognitive behaviors and a simple look at our dinner table show us the damage we are inflicting upon ourselves and our loved ones.

Typical modern-day diet is very poor in nutritional value, vitamins, minerals and fibers, yet very high in calories, refined carbohydrates and the wrong types of fats.

This diet, studies show, is not only directly related to cardiovascular problems, inflammatory and chronic diseases, but it is also directly related to stress, mood disturbance, irritability, lack of motivation, inappropriate social behaviors, low cognitive performance and poor memory.

Studies show a significant correlation between the type of food we choose to eat and our mental health. Increased consumption of processed and refined foods is linked to anxiety [4]. Low intake of fruits, vegetable, dairy and good quality meat is linked to increased stress levels [5].

Daily consumption of sweets and candy at the age of ten is linked to increased violence behavior in adulthood [6]. Eating junk food at the young age of 4 is associated with hyperactivity and behavior problems in childhood as well as later in life [7].

### ***How Does it Work?***

To understand the mechanism behind food effect on our mental health and social behavior, bare with me as we take a closer look at our biochemistry and physiological reactions.

#### **Blood sugar level:**

When we look at our mood swings, anxiety and irritability, the first culprit that comes to mind is erratic blood sugar level (BSL). Both hypoglycemia (low BSL) and hyperglycemia (high BSL) are detrimental to our health. The first drains our energy and depresses our mood and vitality; the later predisposes us to obesity, diabetes and uncomfortable mood swings.



When our blood sugar is low, our body sends us a signal usually by making us more fidgety, anxious, and stressed or by making us crave sweets and stimulants. Since we are always 'on the run', we fetch a quick fix. We resort to a chocolate bar, candy or cake to supply us with the required sugar 'dose'; we get a cup of coffee, can of coke or smoke a cigarette to give us a boost of adrenaline, the well-known fight-and-flight neurotransmitter that raises our BSL.

Eating instant refined sweets, although lifesaving in some cases, can start a vicious cycle of swinging blood levels of insulin and sugar which further disturbs our mood, increases our stress, and predisposes us to diabetes. Also raising our adrenaline through caffeine or nicotine aggravates our stress and anxiety, and, on the long run, affects our blood pressure, heart, and immunity.

### **Nutritional needs:**

An erratic BSL is not the only mechanism by which our modern diet wreaks havoc with our mental and social health, a diet lacking in many essential nutritional values is another major disruptive mechanism.

Amino acids, the building blocks of protein, are also the building blocks of our neurotransmitters; these are what Candace Pert, the famous neuroscientist, calls 'molecules of emotion'. From the amino acid tryptophan for instance, serotonin, our mood boosting

neurotransmitter, is synthesized. Low serotonin levels are linked to suicidal tendency, depression, violence and aggressive behaviors [8].

The amino acids phenyl alanine and tyrosine are the building blocks for dopamine and nor adrenaline, our motivational and feeling-good neurotransmitters. Dopamine also plays an essential role in controlling the reward and punishment processes in our brain [9].

We need a constant supply of essential amino acids to keep our mood and emotions in check. The right balance, amount and type of the amino acids are determined by the composition and quality of our dietary protein.

B vitamins are another missing essential. They play an important role in metabolism and nervous system health. They are also directly involved in the synthesis of many neurotransmitters. Besides, vitamin B6 is known to reduce risk and even treat premenstrual depression, and vitamin B12 deficiency is linked to dementia [10].

Omega-3 fatty acids deficiency is linked to depression and dementia<sup>[11]</sup>, and omega-3 supplements are shown to prevent aggression and hostility[12], control anger and improve social behavior<sup>[13]</sup>.

Essential minerals, especially zinc, manganese, chromium, copper and iron also contribute their share. Chromium helps controlling BSL and



iron is an important factor in neurotransmitters synthesis [14]. Iron deficiency is linked to depression and depleted energy [15].

Other vitamins are involved in our complex behavioral adjustment. Vitamin C, E and A are essential for nerve cell health, vitamin D deficiency is linked to depression and neurodegenerative diseases and vitamin K plays its role in nervous tissue biochemistry[16].

### ***What Should we Eat?***

Research performed in British and US prisons showed that aggressive and anti-social behaviors even in criminals could be corrected, at least in part, through dietary intervention <sup>[17]</sup>. And, needless to say, the natural and synergistic effects achieved by consuming whole natural food in a balanced diet is far better than administering individual nutrients in capsules and pills.

For an optimum performance and optimum state of mind, we need first and foremost to balance our BSL. The safest and most effective way to do that is balancing our diet quality, quantity and timing.

We need to eat healthy diet with whole grains, lots of fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, and legumes. Choose high quality lean animal protein and remember that a little goes a long way; these are great compact protein source, so you do not need much. Eat fish at least



once or twice a week and consume 1-2 tablespoons of flaxseeds or chia seeds daily to supply your need for omega-3 fatty acids.

Eating balanced healthy three meals a day with two snacks in between supply us with the needed energy and nutrients to sustain our health and adjust our mood. Don't skip meals especially breakfast and don't forget your salad bowl along with your lunch and dinner. Take your time, enjoy the setting and feast your eyes before your palate.

Avoid refined carbohydrates, simple sugars, over processed goods, energy drinks and caffeine. Reduce your intake of food with high Glycemic Index and avoid all foods with added preservatives, colors or flavors. Do not consume Trans-fats, the un-natural fat found in margarine and fried foods.

Finally, traditional Books of Prophetic medicine talked about one of our best mood soothing foods: *Talbinah*. *Talbinah* is a thin barley soup made with barley flour and adjusted to a milky consistency (and hence its name *Talbinah*, from the Arabic word, *laban*— meaning milk). It could be sweetened with honey or served as savory soup with added spices. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated, "If any of the Messenger's family became ill, the Messenger (PBUH) would recommend *Talbinah* to be prepared. He says: 'It soothes the grief and cleanses the ailing heart just as one of you cleans dirt off her face with water.'" (Ibn Maajah). Recent studies on the effect of *Talbinah* showed



its significant effect in boosting mental health, relieving depression and anxiety and balancing the mood [18].

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## ■ How to Naturally Detoxify Your Body?\*

These days, detoxification seems to be a catch all phrase for curing whatever ails you. Popular magazines are plastered with many suggestions on the proper way to detoxify, many of which are irresponsible.

This is not to say that the need for detoxification is a hoax. On the contrary, the world we live in today is ever increasingly toxic. The air we breathe, the water we drink and bathe in, the food we eat, and the clothes we wear are all potential contact points for toxic exposure.



**The little daily exposures add up to a life time of poisoning our bodies. Dr. David Brady, ND, author of *Detoxification for Health*, compiled a list of situations that could lead to toxic exposure:**

1. Physical, such as injury, inflammation and excess exercise (excess lactic acid).
2. Nutritional such as excess food, additives, alcohol and transfatty acids.

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\* By Anisa Abeytia.



3. Infection, including bacterial, fungal and parasitic.
4. Chemical, such as xenobiotics, like plastics and organic substances.

I would also add, emotional stress, mostly caused by our relationships with other people and our reaction to them.

It is no wonder that many people are interested in learning how to detox. But as in every matter, the way we approach something makes all the difference in the world. The professional irresponsibility in recommending detoxification to everyone is wide spread and worrisome.

Not everyone should detoxify, but everyone should support their body's ability to move waste out, to detoxify and cleanse.

### **What Is Detoxification?**

Typically, only liver function is considered when discussing the topic of supporting detoxification, but the entire body serves as a site for detoxification.

At a 2006 conference held in Los Angeles titled, "The role of detoxification and the gastrointestinal environment in chronic disease," Brady linked many chronic diseases to the toxic burden our body

bares and its inability to remove waste efficiently. So let us briefly look at the physical structures involved in this process.

The various systems the body uses to carry away harmful substances include the sweat glands, lymph nodes, tears, nose, gastrointestinal tract, throat, lungs, kidney, gallbladder and the liver. A dysfunction in one system can lead to an overburden and failure of another, so they all must function as a team.

Toxins that are not eliminated by other systems are passed to the liver where it selects the best enzyme to convert the substance into something the body can then excrete.

We do not have an endless supply of enzymes. The body must make these enzymes from nutrients in the body. If the body is deficient in any one of the nutrients needed, the enzyme will not be formed properly and the process won't work.

Some very important nutrients to have in abundance in the body are the antioxidants, vitamins C and E, beta-carotene, vitamin A, selenium and zinc. It is critical that one builds up reserves of these nutrients to support the detoxification systems. If the liver isn't functioning properly and is slow, the body can slowly poison itself.



It is important to note that the body has difficulty in excreting many chemicals because they are oil based (mostly the manmade chemicals). Our bodies use water as the means to break down chemicals (water being the universal solvent).

If the chemical is not water based, it settles in our body. Mercury is infamous for lodging in the fatty tissues of our body like the brain and reproductive organs.

*Supporting the Detoxification System.*

There are various methods, foods, herbs and nutrients that can help remove waste. However, it is of paramount importance to build up the body by giving it proper foods, clean water and a healthy lifestyle.

**Below is a list of things I personally use to help cleanse my body and recommend my clients to use:**

- Having a positive self-image and positive outlook on life. Self-doubt is toxic, as are all negative emotions.
- Super foods like green and red powders made from dehydrated herbs, fruits and vegetables. There are various types available at health food stores. I like these powders because it is a quick and easy way to provide your body with most of the phyto (plant) nutrients it needs in 1-2 tablespoons.



- Probiotics (life giving) provide our bodies with the healthy bacteria it needs to break down and utilize foods and prevent infection.
- Fiber is extremely important because it binds toxins to it so they can be excreted. Fiber is found in leafy greens, fruit, and flax seeds.
- One table spoon of ground flax seeds in 8 oz of water is usually enough. If you are not accustomed to consuming large amounts of fiber, go slowly. Do not over do it. The consequences can be very painful. Avoid most commercially available fiber products.
- Dry brushes made of natural fibers can be used to move the lymph found in lymph vessels that lie just below the skin. Start on the right side of your body and gently use upward strokes, always towards the heart. Drink plenty of water afterwards.
- A simple hot bath once a week or even once a month, can do much by opening pores, especially if you remain in the bath until the water cools. Adding relaxing herbs like lavender, chamomile and lemon balm help alleviate stress.
- Some helpful herbs to support the liver are dandelion, burdock root, milk thistle seeds. They can be taken as teas or ground and sprinkled over food. Check with a health care practitioner for dose.



- Some body work methods are sauna, self-massage with oil after bath, reflexology, acupressure and acupuncture. Something that I benefited the most from was jin shin jyutu.
- Exercising 3-5 times a day for 15-30 minutes helps the liver and gets things flowing.
- Lastly and most importantly is water. Without water, no process in the body can take place. To find out how much water you should be consuming divide your body weight in pounds by two and drink that amount in ounces. If you weight 160 lbs, you would need 80 oz of water.

In closing, you may feel worse before you feel better. You may get a bit of diarrhea, but hang in there. It may take your body a few days, weeks or months to adjust to the changes you made.

**Note:** If you are pregnant, nursing or planning to become pregnant never attempt to detoxify yourself. If you are chronically ill, or are recovering from a chronic or acute illness, you should build yourself up before you detoxify. Detoxification should never be attempted without the supervision of a certified health care practitioner. You need to be sure that your liver and other detoxification pathways (like the bowel) are functioning properly.

***This article was first published in 2001 and is currently republished for its importance.***

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## ■ **New Beginnings: Unraveling Weight Loss Dilemmas\***

If you're like most of the world's population, one of your top three new year's resolutions must be: I have to lose weight.

You will also probably start the uphill road by going online and checking out if maybe, just maybe, there's a new gadget, diet, pill, or anything that you're unaware of which might make your task easier. I know. Been there, done that.



Try googling the word "weight loss" and you'll be bombarded by more than a million hits all catering to this worldwide demand. A lot of people are making a lot of money off the overweight issue.

There are simply too many options out there: low-carb diets, high protein diets, low fat diets, calorie controlled diets, and there are diets endorsed by celebrities.

Most diets will help you sharpen your math skills as you count grams of fat, grams of carbs, calories or glasses of water. Soon, you can even start doing fractions without using pen and paper.

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\* By Lamyia Tawfik.



But that's really an add-on value. The reason you count, of course, is to keep track of whatever the diet you're following wants you to keep track of.

### **Low Carb vs. Low Fat**

Much to the misery of bread makers around the world, famous nutritionists have recently waged the war against carbs. Carbs, they say, are the real culprits of weight gain. The plan?

Eliminate carbs completely from your diet, stock up on the protein and watch the weight melt away. These diets, like the famous Atkins diet, have you counting grams of carbs.

So you can basically order a burger and eat it without the bread. You can eat vegetable sautéed with real butter and still lose weight. Load up on cheese but no.. you can't have it on bread. And don't eat fruit, they are carbs.

Dr. Mohamed Aboulgheit, a nutritionist from Egypt says that Atkins is in fact effective in weight loss: *"In the beginning it was believed that Atkins was harmful. It increases the levels of cholesterol in the blood, due to the unlimited fat intake and so it was believed to be bad for the heart. However, a recent report by the European Association for the Study of Obesity showed that those following Atkins do lose weight and hence the level of cholesterol decreases even if they eat a lot of fat,"* he said.

However, there are other problems. Lack of energy, lack of warmth, and most importantly, it's impracticability. What happens after the weight loss?

*"As soon as the person gets off the diet, there is a gain of 2-3 kgs, which is not worrying. But when they go back to eating normally, they regain all what they've lost,"* Aboulgheit said.

Hence, weight maintenance is jeopardized because unless you plan to kiss all carbs goodbye for the rest of your life, you're likely to put it all on back again.

Carbs are also an easy source of energy, so low-carb diets are particularly dangerous for children, adolescents, old people or women who are pregnant or lactating, he said, adding that it's important to have medical supervision when following any form of diet plan.

*"The ideal diet should give energy that helps a person perform in a normal way,"* he said.

Whereas other diets that advocate eating carbs and reducing fat will have you counting grams of fat. According to Aboulgheit, following a low-fat diet is also effective for weight loss.

*"One gram of fat gives around 9 kilo calories and one gram of carbs or protein is around 4 kilo calories. So by reducing fats, I also reduced the overall calorie intake, however, low-fat diets present a different set of problems,"* he said.



These problems include the deficiency of vitamins A, D, E, and K which are carried into the body by fats (fat-soluble vitamins), explained Aboulgheit. While taking a vitamin supplement may help in this respect, other obstacles also exist.

*“Some oils are actually beneficial such as olive oil and oils found in nuts, they increase the body’s HDL (High Density Lipoproteins) which protects the heart from cholesterol,”* he said. Another issue is that low fat diets make people tired and feel that they are unable to function.

Fats are also important for some neurological diseases. *“The nerves are covered by fat and consuming a low-fat diet could be harmful,”* said Aboulgheit.

*“Normally, fat should constitute 15 to 20 percent of the calories intake of the day. If it is less, then there’s a problem,”* he explained.

### ***Cut to the Chase***

According to Aboulgheit, there are three components for effective weight management. A diet program, an exercise program, and behavioral modification.

In terms of diet control, food is regulated in a way that maintains the patient’s healths as well as helping him maintain weight loss. *“So it’s not just a slimming process.”*



Lowering calories while following the food-guide pyramid is ideal. The food guide pyramid says a person's daily consumption should be 50 percent carbohydrates (preferably whole grain), 15-20 percent fats, and 10-20 percent protein.

*"It's important to heed medical supervision since if anyone reduced his calories in a haphazard way it may be unsafe," he said.*

Calorie intake depends on lifestyle and the person himself, said Aboulgheit, *"their age, sex, medical conditions and if a woman, whether or not she's pregnant or lactating."*

Which is why the optimal diet is tailored for each person. *"We calculate roughly how many calories this person needs to lose weight,"* he said.

For example, explains Aboulgheit, if you get a diet plan from your nutritionist and decide to distribute it to all the people in your neighborhood, you are in fact doing them a disservice. The reason?

*"Because each person has his own requirements and health specifications. A diet that may work for a 20-year old is different from that which is recommended for a young child or a 60 year old."*

The perfect diet should help a person lose  $\frac{1}{2}$  (1.1 lb) to 1 kg (2.2 lb) a week. *"This is a safe, heart-friendly ratio and is the recommended rate of loss around the world,"* he said.



### ***Hitting the Treadmill***

The role of exercise in weight management is often misunderstood, explained Aboulgheit.

*“A kilo of fat is almost 7,000 kilo calories (20 to 25 hours of exercise is required to lose that). However, a moderately intensive exercise program would only burn around 250 to 300 calories in an hour,”* he said.

Exercise has a small role to play in weight loss but is vital for weight maintenance, Aboulgheit elaborated.

*“That’s not to say that exercise is unimportant. It has endless benefits besides weight loss such as prevention of diabetes, cholesterol management, prevention of cardiac problems, and especially for women, prevention of osteoporosis. In terms of weight reduction, it may help in losing 200 gms (0.2 kilo or 0.44 lb) per week,”* he said.

Aboulgheit explained that exercise helps in boosting the body’s basal metabolic rate and hence does affect weight loss.

It is recommended during a diet because later on, for weight maintenance, it’s an important factor. *“If we are accustomed to changing our lifestyle while losing weight, maintaining will be made easier,”* he said.

### ***Behavioral Modification***

Because it's a lifestyle change, Aboulgheit recommends behavioral modifications such as introducing movement to your daily schedule.

If you live on the fourth floor for example, take the stairs all the way or at least half the way up. Park your car a few blocks away from work or even walk to work (which in fact helps reduce pollution, so you'll be doing everyone a favor).

Another strategy is to return the fork and knife back to the plate after each bite. *"This helps you eat slower and hence feel fuller since the stomach takes some time to feel full,"* he said.

He also recommends taking a sip of water after each bite. *"You'll find yourself eating half the amount of food, hence reducing calorie intake,"* he said.

### ***Surgery, Pills, and Other Extreme Measures***

Eagerness or impatience might make you want to go under the scalpel, just to get it over with. It's tempting but is it worth it?

Most honest doctors would only recommend surgery for serious problems or for those who have failed repeatedly, after genuine attempts to lose the weight and are suffering health consequences.

Medications are less drastic but there are too many out there, all falling under two groups. The first are those sold over the counter. They include carbohydrate blockers, slimming teas, green tea and other herbal concoctions.

*"They are all proven to be ineffective, some of them are even unsafe,"* stressed Aboulgheit. The only two medications that are approved by the Food and Drug Administration are sibutramine HCl monohydrate and Orlistat.

*"Orlistat increases the metabolism and works centrally to suppress appetite. So you eat less and burn more. The side effects include thirst and increased nervousness in the beginning. The second is sibutramine HCl monohydrate, which prevents 30 percent of the fat absorption and should be avoided by people with severe colon problems. Both are safe if given to the right person and should always be prescribed by a doctor,"* he said.

The internet is filled with claims about how drugs or certain programs can help you shed the weight "easily" or "without changing your lifestyle", or my personal favorite: "eat all you want and still lose weight". Wishful thinking.

The truth of the matter is, weight loss, like any goal, requires discipline, effort, change of lifestyle, and creating time.

Put simply, you can't eat all you want and lose weight. You also can't lose the weight without effort and you can't hope to maintain the weight you lost, if you don't change your lifestyle.

***This article was first published in 2006 and is currently republished for its importance.***

## Chapter II: Healthy Food vs. Junk

- Unhealthy & You Know It.

- Ask Your Doctor.



## Unhealthy & You Know It

### ■ It's Called Junk and You Still Eat It\*

The profits of giant fast food chains hit billions of dollars every year as hungry consumers all around the world continue to line up to get hamburgers or pizzas with French fries and sodas.



Fast-paced citizens of the 21st century spend their money and risk their health to eat junk. Mainly composed of fat and salt, fast food is nothing but that.

Americans eat it to enjoy its delicious taste and to save their time and effort; non-Americans, especially Arabs, consume fast food to imitate

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\* By Sara Khorshid.

the American behavior and to be cool and trendy. Both groups of people are gravely harming their health.

### **Fast Food= Processed Food**

Basically, fast food is processed food; but what is processed food to begin with?

Processed food is simply food that has been altered in a factory from the way in which nature presented it, as part of a bulk process where natural and chemical food additives are added. This leaves the final product without its naturally created nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and enzymes.

Besides giving the food its delectable taste, food additives keep it lasting unspoiled for a long time, which means that processed food is usually stored for a long time before it is purchased and eaten! The oldest natural food additives are salt, sugar, and vinegar; and although these are natural, an excess in their amounts seriously endangers the health.

Junk foods characteristically contain high amounts of salt (sodium chloride). Sodium is necessary for various metabolic functions; too much of it, however, is associated with an increased risk of



hypertension (high blood pressure). Hypertension is a known risk factor for heart disease.

If this is the case with natural food additives, then how about artificial ones?

With the advent of processed foods in the past thirty years, there has been a massive explosion in the chemical adulteration of foods with additives.

In his best seller, *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser reveals to the American public very interesting facts about what they eat. He talks about his experience in a factory in New Jersey where he discovered how the flavors of McDonald's food products are fabricated.

Current food processing methods gather many parts of many animals into one burger. The burger's beef has to be deep-fried in oil at high temperatures over 300° C, and this goes for almost all the popular fast foods that have to be deep-fried, consequently, they become denatured and possibly even carcinogenic.

Moreover, there is a very interesting story to tell about the popular McDonald's French fries exposing the way they are processed, and the flavors that distinguish them. For decades, McDonald's cooked its French fries in a mixture of 7% cottonseed oil and 93 % beef tallow.



The mixture gave the fries their unique flavor and more saturated beef fat per ounce than a McDonald's hamburger.

In 1990, amidst a barrage of criticism over the amount of cholesterol in its fries, McDonald's switched to pure vegetable oil. This presented the company with a challenge: how to make fries that subtly taste like beef without cooking them in beef tallow. A look at the ingredients in McDonald's French fries suggests how the problem was solved. Toward the end of the list is a seemingly innocuous yet oddly mysterious phrase: "natural flavor". That ingredient helps to explain why the fries taste so good.

Food additives interfere with what we drink as well as what we eat. Let alone the dangers posed by the chemical ingredients of soft drinks, additives put in the most popular beverages in the world are quite unsafe. Brominated vegetable oil (BVO) is used to keep flavor oils present in soft drinks in suspension thus giving the well-known cloudy appearance to these beverages.

Small residues of BVO are trapped in body fat, and it has not yet been scientifically proven that BVO is safe. Bromate, the main ingredient of BVO, is a poison. Just two to four ounces of a 2 percent solution of BVO can severely poison a child.



Another very ironic fact about soft drinks is that diet Coke and diet Pepsi are considered the way out for those who care to have a healthy diet. These people are unaware that instead of sugar, the artificial sweetener in the diet sodas is acesulfame K. This is linked to depression, insomnia, neurological disease, and a plethora of other illnesses; doctors even warn that acesulfame K may be carcinogenic.

We thus see how the mouth-watering tastes of the much popular American fast food diet are all about chemicals, artificial flavors and food additives that are added to the food in the course of a hi-tech manufacturing process.

### **Fat and Sugar: Obesity Has Become a Phenomenon**

Simply put, fast food is high in fat and sugar – that is to say high in calories – and low in its nutrient value. Fast food is particularly high in saturated fats, generally preferred by the food industry because it is cheap and can withstand high cooking temperatures.

It has been scientifically proven that saturated fats are correlated to cholesterol levels in the blood, and can therefore cause heart diseases.

While experts state that a healthy meal should have less than 30% of its calories from fat, with 9 grams of fat and 270 calories, a McDonald's hamburger just breaks the 30% ceiling. Burger King's

hamburger has 15 grams of fat and 320 calories, i.e. 42% of its calories are from fat. Other famous restaurants' hamburgers have more calories and larger percentages of fats.

Thus, hamburgers give us much more calories than we need and their calories come mainly from fats.

When it comes to sugar, it is enough to say that the typical can of soda contains an equivalent of 10 teaspoons of sugar.

Fast food thus offers much more calories than our systems can digest; and these extra calories are stored in our bodies in the form of fats. Excessive storage of fats in the body leads to obesity, which does not merely prevent people from looking slim, but it furthermore predisposes them to many disorders, such as insulin-dependent diabetes, hypertension, stroke, and coronary artery disease. More fatally, obesity has been linked to an increased incidence of certain cancers, notably cancers of the colon, rectum, prostate, breast, uterus, and cervix.

If fast food and soft drinks mark the American way of life, then it is easy to understand why more than half of all adult Americans are overweight. Actually, both scientific studies and common sense indicate that fast food is the primary reason for obesity.



Consuming junk food does not only mean eating the chemical food additives that are added while the food is being processed, nor is it limited to looking fat and getting exposed to obesity-related illnesses. The problems of fast food are far more diversified.

"No two countries that both have a McDonald's have ever fought a war against each other," says Thomas Friedman, the well-known globalization theorist, and the Foreign Affairs columnist.

According to Friedman's McPeace theory, McDonald's might prevent wars; but can McDonald's prevent the diseases caused by the junk it serves, such as obesity, diabetes, heart diseases, and even cancer?

## ■ Will These Drinks Relax You? \*

Would you like a drink to relax you?

This isn't a phrase that Muslims hear often. However, a new wave of specialty drinks is trying to change that. A new beverage is on the market which hopes to find a lucrative home between two financially successful categories – that of “vitamin waters” and “energy drinks.”



These new “relaxing drinks” promise to help you relax, sleep better and feel less stressed. Although this is a refreshing idea in the midst of our overly caffeinated societies, how these drinks are marketed and manufactured pose issues for debate. The main issue is the ingredients in the new “relaxing drinks”, their availability, how they are marketed and how they are labeled.

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\* By Karima Burns.



### **(Un)Relaxing Ingredient**

All of the new drink lines feature melatonin as a key ingredient. However, the safety of melatonin is not discussed on their websites.

Melatonin is a hormone produced in the brain's pineal gland and is secreted at night (Ratzburg). Although it sounds deceptively "natural," one must remember that all human hormones when used in prescription drugs are regulated because they carry substantial risks that require careful medical supervision.

For example, Thomas Moore points out that, "Insulin – an essential and lifesaving drug for Type 1 diabetes – can [...] produce a loss of consciousness and coma. Estrogen, unopposed by progesterone, is a growth promoter and proven carcinogen. It causes endometrial cancer, and possibly other cancers. Thyroid hormone, important and safe replacement hormone for millions, caused heart attacks when used in a different form to lower cholesterol." (Moore)

Francis Mercuri, Licensed Acupuncturist and Doctor of Oriental Medicine, states that, "melatonin supplementation is really a type of self-administered hormone replacement therapy, whose effects and contraindications have not yet been noted extensively."

Melatonin should not be taken by people with certain medical conditions such as severe allergies, severe mental symptoms, auto-immune diseases or cancers such as leukemia. There may also be negative effects on the reproductive system, so pregnant women or those who want to conceive should not take those drinks. (Ratzburg; Ebner)

Mercuri shares, “Melatonin, in the public mind, is being thought of as a ‘sleeping pill’ whereas, in reality, it is a hormone intimately connected with the day/night circadian cycles. This creates two problems: The first pertains to timing. Melatonin naturally peaks during periods of darkness; taking it at other times (such as in the daytime, following a ‘graveyard’ shift) is highly questionable from a circadian point of view.”

Melatonin is not the only ingredient in question. The beverage RelaxZen contains passionflower and GABA as well. Passionflower is a strong depressant that can significantly reduce blood pressure, and GABA “should not be combined with alcohol or other depressants.” (Drug Safety Site). DreamWater also contains GABA.

However, IChill has chosen Valerian as one of its key ingredients. The website does not mention that Valerian should not be taken by people who have liver problems or are pregnant or nursing and, according to



drug safety sites, should also, “never be combined with melatonin.” (Altmed)

Surprisingly, although the safety of these drinks is questionable, they are allowed to be marketed without a prescription. And although the UK, France and Canada have outlawed them, they are still being distributed in the United States. (Ebner)

Dreamwater’s site states that “the information presented is for informational purposes only. Any consumer should consult their doctor, practitioner, and/or pharmacist for any health problems/questions and before using any supplements or before making any changes in prescribed medications.” However, you are not required to have a prescription for ordering and no contraindications are listed, of which there are many. (DreamWater)

### **“Chemistry is Chemistry”**

In fact, lack of information on the ingredients contained in the drinks is not the only thing missing from the websites and labels on the bottles.

A glance at all of the websites and labels reveals that these drinks advertise a “blend of stress reducing and mood enhancing herbs and vitamins is especially formulated to relax you throughout your day.” (RelaxZen) However, little safety information is provided.



RelaxZen includes “commuters and travelers” on its list of who its drink can benefit. However, the only safety advice on any of the three websites (RelaxZen, IChill and Dream Water) clearly says, “This product may cause drowsiness... do not take when operating machinery or driving a vehicle.” (IChill)

Other dangers are not even mentioned at all such as the combined use of “uppers and downers”, long term effects of melatonin, dangers of consuming hormones on a regular basis and dangers of combining these drinks with medications. Even worse, studies linking GABA to possible increased risk of suicide are not listed at all. (Korpi)

A possible risk associated with the drink is how people will use it. Seventy-five percent of Americans between the ages of 55 and 64 drink coffee and 47 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds drink coffee daily (Dowydizka). With caffeine drinkers being so prevalent, chances are high that people will mix caffeine (a stimulant) with a relaxing drink (a depressant.) Many studies have shown that mixing depressants with stimulants can cause symptoms such as severe dehydration, insomnia, vomiting, nose bleeds and even cardiac and respiratory conditions that might lead to death. (Ball State University)

So why are there so many dangers to drinking these relaxing waters when they are filled with such “natural” ingredients?



Biochemist Stephen Naylor says that the problem is that these “natural” drinks are not natural at all.

“Chemistry is chemistry,” he explains. “Whether you're extracting a hormone from a plant, or chemically synthesizing it, the moment you start to handle a chemical like melatonin, it is going to undergo other chemical reactions, and add whole new dimension to biological and toxicological activity. That is just reality.” (Moore)

## ■ Think Twice Before Drinking Diet\*

Aspartame (As-par-teem) is an artificial sweetener, created by agriculture super giant Monsanto Inc. To some it is an alternative to sugar.

Those wishing to shed a few pounds often switch to Aspartame products hoping to see the difference around their waist.

Aspartame is closely associated with diet soft drinks, but has moved into an abundance of dry food products, vitamins and even chewing gum.

Studies support the fact that Aspartame is a harmful substance, and further evidence suggests those who use it are susceptible to an array of damaging symptoms and even weight gain.

### What's Wrong with Aspartame?

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\* By Barbara J. Hunter.



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According to Betty Martini of Mission Possible International, an organization geared to educating the public on the threats of Aspartame, “When the temperature of Aspartame exceeds 86 degrees Fahrenheit, the wood alcohol coverts to formaldehyde, and then to formic acid.”

It’s due to this process that the system becomes toxic. Daily and long-term consumption of Aspartame can mirror symptoms of muscular sclerosis and systemic lupus.

Further, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) presents a lengthy list of symptoms attributed to Aspartame use, including chronic fatigue, menstrual problems, heart palpitations, poor memory, vision loss, hair loss, seizures, and headaches or migraines.

Many researchers say it is hard for the consumer to link their symptoms to Aspartame. A person who may suffer from headaches and then begins to suffer from insomnia, may simply believe their condition is getting worse, and is most likely related to a larger problem or disease.

Upon going to the doctor, the patient will relay a batch of symptoms that the doctor will interpret and run appropriate testing for, but will most likely miss the underlying predator Aspartame as the true cause.

Lee Falk from Vital Nutrients, a leading vitamin manufacturer in the US, states, "I was suffering from lower back pain for over a year, and consulted many doctors who could not determine what was wrong with me.

Finally, on the suggestion of a friend, I discontinued use of an ice tea that contained Aspartame. The pain went away immediately." Lee explains that although it was hard to give up her "favorite" drink, it was well worth it. She, like many others, are looking at labels before they purchase a product.

### **Weight Loss or Weight Gain?**

Not only is Aspartame a threat to one's health, it also shows evidence of promoting weight gain, which is a direct contradiction to what the product boasts.

According to Michael Murry, N.D. and Joseph Pizzorno, N.D., authors of the acclaimed Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine, "studies have shown Aspartame to increase the appetite."

They suggest a regular addition of fruit in one's diet, which can "control sugar cravings and promote weight loss in overweight individuals."



Dr. Sandra Cabot, a specialist of the function of the liver for over 23 years, stands by the opinion that Aspartame causes weight gain.

“After having been consulted by thousands of overweight people suffering with problems concerning the liver and/or metabolism, I can assure you that Aspartame will not help you in any way, indeed it will help you to gain unwanted weight.”

Dr. Cabot concludes it is the liver that “breaks down Aspartame to its toxic components.” This process puts stress on the liver. “The liver cells will have less energy for fat burning and metabolism, which will result in fat storing.”

She further explains that the fat “builds inside the liver,” and causes a “fatty liver.” It is at this point that it becomes “difficult to lose the weight.”

Among other things, the liver is responsible for the proper function of the gynecological system. John Lust, N.D. and Michael Tierra, C.A., N.D., write in their book “The Natural Remedy Bible, “any menstrual disorder almost invariably involves the liver malfunction.”

Women who intake Aspartame regularly and suffer from menstrual disorders including endometriosis, may consider discontinuing products which contain Aspartame.

### **What do Supporters Say?**

The Aspartame originator Monsanto Inc., who brought Nutrasweet (Aspartame) to the market in 1985 claims, “aspartame is safe” and “may cause allergic reactions in some individuals.”

One opinion is that “Aspartame manufacture-sponsored studies are designed in a way as to avoid the possibilities of finding adverse effects.”

Monsanto is also known as the number one producer and supporter of Bio-Tech foods. Labeled “Frankenfoods,” Monsanto’s bio-engineered seeds are ruining the very landscape of the world.

### **What Can You Do?**

Most people notice immediate relief of their symptoms when they discontinue using Aspartame. “It often takes at least sixty days without Aspartame to see a significant improvement.” The first line of defense is education. Read labels before you purchase products.

Be familiar with sister names of Aspartame, like Nutrasweet, Equal, Spoonful, Canderl, acesulfame-k, sunette, and L-Aspartyl-L-



Phenylalanine Methyl Ester. Look for natural sugar substitutes like stevia, which derives from a wild plant.

“Aspartame destroys the nervous system, the brain and the optic nerve, and ravages every organ in the body,” says Bettie Martini. All one needs to do is stop using it to reap the benefits.

### **Always Look on the Bright Side of Things**

For some, Aspartame is a highly addictive substance, which takes a huge effort to overcome. For others, the lack of Aspartame-free products may be hard to come by. When in doubt go natural.

Revert to a higher consumption of water and natural products like fruit and vegetables. As Henry David Thoreau said, “Nature is doing her best each moment to make us well. She exists for no other end. Do not resist. With the least inclination to be well, we shouldn’t be sick.”

*For those who are suffering from Aspartame-related illness, and would like more information on how to report them, or is in need of support see: [The Aspartame Victims Support Group](#).*

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*Editor's Note: This article was first published in 2002 and is currently published for its importance.*

## ■ High-Fructose Corn Syrup: An Ingredient to Avoid?\*

It can be hard to understand the ingredients on prepackaged foods these days, which makes it a challenge to decipher their effects on our bodies. One such ingredient is high-fructose corn syrup.



High-fructose corn syrup has been around since the 1970s, showing up in a variety of foods and beverages. In simple terms, it is derived from corn and is composed of between 42–55 percent fructose, with the rest being glucose or other higher sugars. Not only does it sweeten food at a level comparable with table sugar, but it also keeps products fresh as it maintains its moisture.

### What Studies Say

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\* By Suzanne Fouad.

Although it shows up in a vast amount of products on supermarket shelves, some food items are now boasting that they are free of high-fructose corn syrup. This seems to imply that it poses some harm to the body, but just what kind of harm?

**Obesity:** Studies show conflicting stances about the harms high-fructose corn syrup are said to bring about. For example, according to MayoClinic.com, early studies that showed that beverages such as sodas that are sweetened with high fructose corn syrup are linked to obesity are challenged by other studies showing that high fructose corn syrup isn't necessarily less healthy than other sweeteners and that other factors can be contributors to obesity.

**Diabetes and metabolism issues:** Recent studies are now pointing a finger at high-fructose corn syrup, indicating that large amounts of it can start to have an effect on metabolism, which puts people at the risk of diabetes. Basically, fructose uses up the body's adenosine-5-triphosphate (known as ATP). When ATP is used up, many body functions begin to lag. Small amounts of high-fructose corn syrup are not too harsh on the body, but too much of it can deplete the ATP and stress the body out. This stress causes the body to begin resisting insulin, which in turn can cause type 2 Diabetes (3).

One of the more common ways people come in contact with high-fructose corn syrup is via soft drinks. The Framingham Heart Study (a



project of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and of Boston University) revealed that those who drank at least one soft drink a day were at a higher risk of developing metabolism issues when compared with those who did not have a soft drink. The Nurses' Health Study (One of the largest and longest running investigations of factors that influence women's health) conducted a study, which also showed that women who had one or more sugary drinks daily were more likely to become diabetic than those who did not consume the drinks.

**High blood pressure:** Another concern surrounding high-fructose corn syrup is that it may raise blood pressure. Dr. Diana Jalal, an assistant professor of medicine at the University of Colorado, conducted a study that found that even when blood pressure is normally healthy, the sweetener can still drive it up. Jalal's study found that a daily intake of 74 gram or more was linked to a 36 percent risk increase of having a blood pressure of 140/90 or higher. The ideal blood pressure should be somewhere below 120/80.

The reason behind the increase in blood pressure was not definitive. However, Jalal speculates that fructose decreases the amount of the nitric oxide produced, which is responsible for relaxing vessels thereby lowering blood pressure. Fructose can also potentially send a signal to the kidneys to reserve more salt, which in turn can cause high blood pressure.

**Fatty liver disease:** Another study was conducted, this one by Saint Louis University, in order to be presented at the Digestive Diseases Week meeting. The study involved a group of mice that were gathered and allowed to eat whenever they wanted. They were not forced to eat. The intention was to mimic the American lifestyle in terms of diet. The mice were fed a diet that was high in high-fructose corn syrup, roughly equivalent to eight cans of soda a day in a human diet.

The study showed that the diet, along with an inactive lifestyle led to fatty liver disease in the mice. There was also a reason to believe that the fructose caused the mice to have a decrease feeling in fullness. In adults this means eating more. The study was worrisome in that its results are already seen in American children. One out of every eight children in America suffers from fatty liver disease, according to Brent Tetri, MD, a professor at Saint Louis University. The promising factor is that the damage can be reversible with a switch to a healthier diet and lifestyle.

### **FDA's Stance**

The Food and Drug Administration, also known as the FDA, is known as the regulating body in the United States that ensures that consumers are protected from harmful food and drugs. The FDA predicts that high-fructose corn syrup will increase in production and will continue to replace sucrose and invert sugar, which is a mixture of



glucose and fructose. This is largely said to be due to its cost as it is found to be cheaper.

They also state that, "There is no evidence that such replacement, per se, would have an adverse effect on public health." They do go on to state, however, that "It is not possible to determine without additional data, whether an increase in consumption-that would result if there were a significant increase in the total of corn sugar, corn syrup, invert sugar and sucrose added to foods-would constitute a dietary hazard".

### **Ways to Avoid High-Fructose Corn Syrup**

With the concerns surrounding high-fructose corn syrup, consumers may be led to limit their consumption of products containing the ingredient. Limiting foods that are processed as well as foods with added sugar can help.

Eating natural fresh fruits instead of fruit flavored drinks is another way to avoid high fructose corn syrup. When purchasing canned fruit, choosing a variety that is canned in its own juice can be a better alternative rather than those canned in heavy syrup. Most sodas use high fructose corn syrup so consumption of these beverages should be limited as well. It seems as though with the widespread use of high-fructose corn syrup, it can be a difficult ingredient to avoid. However,

with its links to negative impact on health, moderation in the intake of this ingredient seems to be advisable.

### ■ **Supplements Are Not Necessarily the Answer\***

Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an,

**(O you people! Eat of what is on earth, Lawful and good; and do not follow the footsteps of the evil one, for he is to you an avowed enemy.)** (Al-Baqarah 2:168)



As Muslims, we want to be healthy, so that our bodies could be in the best condition to perform our duties. Many people take up supplements out of belief that they will help maintain their health. But are nutritional supplements the kind of thing that the Qur'an is referring to as "lawful and good"?

The scientific community is divided on the impact of supplements on the body. However, the general consensus is that we need to learn

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\* By Karima Burns.



more about them and that if you want to use them, you should consult a professional for advice.

### **Supplements vs. Drugs**

The definition of nutritional supplements may help shed some light on why they have stirred such a controversy over the last few decades.

Nutritional supplement is defined by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) simply as "a product taken by mouth that contains a dietary ingredient intended to supplement the diet." The "dietary ingredients" in these products may include: vitamins, minerals, herbs, or other botanicals, amino acids, and substances, such as enzymes, organ tissues, glandulars, and metabolites." (Thurston)

However the FDA's definition of a drug is not very different. The FDA defines drugs as "articles intended for use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease."

So, a nutritional supplement can be a drug, and a drug can be a nutritional supplement. The line between the two is often blurred, especially when one considers that many drugs come from natural sources, and many nutritional supplements have been extracted from plants in such a way that some do not differ from what are more



commonly defined as drugs. Additionally, both can have powerful pharmacological effects and cause problems if taken incorrectly. (Consumer Reports)

So are nutritional supplements wholesome and safe?

Many people assume that because herbs and vitamins come from "natural" sources, they are safe. However, this is not necessarily true.

Many supplements can cause health problems, when taken in excess amounts, taken by the wrong person, combined with certain medicines, or taken while pregnant. Some supplements have been found to contain little of the named substance and may contain chemicals, pesticides, bacteria, heavy metals, and even pharmaceutical drugs. In April of 2008, one brand of vitamin C in Canada was recalled because it was found to contain large amounts of vitamin A. (Consumer Reports, Cohen)

Well-known nutritional supplement manufacturers have a higher quality of product, but they are still not regulated by any outside agency, so all claims of potency and safety are internally produced. Supplement manufacturers can launch products without any testing at all just by sending the FDA a copy of the language on the label. (FDA)

### **Beyond the Components**



There is the further concern that some nutritional supplements are not even halal. Centrum multivitamins, according to the [FAQs](#) on their website, contain pork gelatin and many vitamin E capsules do as well.

However, beyond the quality and questions of integrity is a more important question: are nutritional supplements necessary? The Linus Pauling Institute, one of the foremost research institutes on orthomolecular medicine, says, "Yes."

The Institute spends millions of dollars each year researching and tracking studies done on nutritional supplements and maintains a comprehensive website, as well as published many books that show the results of these studies. (Higdon)

According to their website, their major areas of research include "cardiovascular and metabolic diseases, cancer, aging, immune function, and neurodegenerative diseases." (Higdon)

However, although many doctors agree that proper nutrition is important for good health, not all believe that supplementation is the answer.

Many experts caution against using supplements to add vitamins and minerals to the diet as multivitamins may not contain the personal balance of nutrition a person needs. It may actually assist in depleting

some nutrients from the body. Individual supplements and vitamin pills may not be as well absorbed by the body as nutrients in foods and some supplements also can have toxic effects in high quantities.

For example, studies at the University of North Carolina have shown that the same anti-inflammatory properties of fish oil, a popular supplement, can also suppress the immune's system response to viral infections.

Additionally, some supplements in excess can even interfere with the body's ability to absorb other vitamins and minerals. An excess of zinc, for example, can interfere with absorption of iron and copper. (Landro)

In 2008, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) suspended a study on vitamin E because of the increased risk of diabetes in the study group subjects, which had been taking therapeutic doses of vitamin E. In April of 2009, an international research team sponsored by the Cochrane Collaborative, even found that consumption of the antioxidant supplements beta-carotene, Vitamin A, and Vitamin E actually correlated with shorter life spans! (ScoutNews; Armijo-Prewitt)

Another reason people can't substitute supplements for food is that there are more than 20,000 different antioxidants in food, but science has only figured out how to isolate a few of these. (Hellerman)

In addition to not being able to reproduce food nutrients, science cannot understand which of the known elements of food may be the most important ones. For example, science can extract sulforaphane, a compound found in broccoli, and put it into a pill. However, this is not the same as actually putting the entire broccoli in a pill.

Amy Stewart, author of *The Earth Moved: On the Remarkable Achievements of Earthworms*, puts it quite simply when she says, "The fiber and juice in an orange, the beneficial oils in a walnut, the micronutrients in a spinach leaf are simply not readily available in pill form." (Stewart)

As science moves forward to learn more about the nutrients in foods, it is ultimately Allah, the Creator of these foods, Who holds the secret to the healing elements present in their mix. Almighty Allah says,

**(O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him ye worship.) (Al-Baqarah2:172).**

## ■ Vital Vitamins: Don't Let the Label Fool You\*

Nutritional supplements, known the world over as vitamins, are essential for maintaining proper health of the body. The lack of adequate vitamin intake will result in various deficiencies.



For example, Vitamin A deficiency can lead to night blindness, dry scaly itchy skin, susceptibility to infections and even loss of taste and smell. Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine) deficiency can lead to anemia, kidney stones, and depression.(1)

The role of the vitamin has increased in importance over the years as the food we eat is decreasing in nutritional content. Studies show conventional produce is not making the mark in providing the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of vitamins. Organic foods still reign as number one for the highest nutrition content.

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\* By Barbara J. Hunter.



According to a report published in Organic Gardening Magazine, data from 41 studies taken between 1946 and 1997 stated, “Vegetables grown organically contained on an average 27 percent more vitamin C, 21 percent more magnesium, 14 percent more phosphorus, and 15 percent fewer nitrates than conventional produce.(2) Consumers also risk consuming bio-engineered foods that sneak their way into the food chain, and contain little, if any, nutritional value.”

This is where the role of the nutritional supplement comes in. Nutritional supplements alleviate the shortfalls in food. Consumers are encouraged to take vitamins on a regular basis. The benefits include disease prevention, increase in energy and even longevity. Choosing a vitamin sounds easy, but not all vitamins on the market are what they claim to be.

### **Choosing a Vitamin**

How often does someone look at the ingredient label on a bottle of vitamins?

Fact is, most believe that the label says it all. Vitamin C should be just that, Vitamin C, but depending on the manufacturer you could be consuming a pill that contains molds, yeast, dyes or wax.

Some ingredient labels even list hidden sugars under the names of glycerin and lecithin. (Please take a moment today to look at the labels on your vitamins. You will find this information under “inactive ingredients” or “other ingredients.”)

But, what about the ingredients you can't see and aren't labeled, nor are they required to be labeled on your vitamins? Vitamins can also contain more harmful contaminants, like salmonella, E. coli, Pseudomonas aeruginosa, or Staphylococcus aureus. Fish oil supplements may contain PCB's, (a known hazardous chemical), mercury, and dioxins. Herbal supplements may contain herbicide and pesticide residue. Chinese herbs may contain heavy metals. The same vitamin that is promoted to help you may be causing you further damage.

### **Vitamin Manufacturers**

The way the process works is that a manufacturer will receive raw materials from a distributor that contain a certificate of authenticity. Manufacturers have the option of testing the validity of this certificate. By doing so they would also ensure that the material does not contain any of the harmful ingredients listed above. Unfortunately, most companies don't do any sort of testing at all and leave consumers to suffer the consequences.



“Current nutritional supplement manufacturing practices are inadequate to assure consistent quality products,” says Rick Liva, R. Ph., ND, and President of Vital Nutrients, a leading vitamin manufacturer in the United States, committed to promoting quality assured vitamins. “Many nutritional supplement companies ask you to trust in blind faith. They believe that raw materials purchased from their suppliers are authentic. However, most manufacturing companies do no testing whatsoever and rely solely on the certificate of analysis provided to them by their raw materials suppliers.”

### **Testing**

There are also different types of testing that can be done. The first type of testing is performed on the premises of the manufacturer. This type of testing, although better than no testing, can be compromised for financial reasons, time constraints and numerous other factors. Independent testing, or testing that is conducted by a non-biased party, off the premises, is the most assured way to ensure the “identity, authenticity and potency” of the materials. Because of the high costs in doing so, independent testing companies shy away from it. Consumers are none the wiser and continue to be deceived.

It is also important to know whether the manufacturer you are purchasing from has products produced by an outside contractor. Furthermore, with regard to the potency of the vitamin, companies



should also be re-testing their finished products. “Our independent labs test our finished goods after manufacturing and then repeat the test on the same lot at twelve months and twenty-four months to verify purity, potency and label claim,” explains Dr. Liva.

### **Is There Any Hope?**

Fortunately, there are a few conscientious vitamin companies that do independent testing.

Such companies manufacture their products through the United States Pharmacopoeia standards and proposed FDA Current Good Manufacturing Practice Guidelines (cGMP) for nutritional supplements.

Dr. Liva explains, “The cGMP’s cover employee training, cleanliness of the facility, documentation, quarantine and release procedures, identity and authenticity of raw materials and many other areas.” All of which ensures a quality product.

Vitamin manufacturers that promote quality standards are harder to find, but not impossible. One way to connect with a responsible vitamin manufacturer is through a naturopathic doctor or medical physician.



## **Cost**

Many people may be wondering what the cost of a quality vitamin is. On the average, a good vitamin may cost 30-50 percent more than most generic brands, but the value is worth it. According to one consumer, Jane Snyder, “the more I read the ingredient labels on vitamins the more appalled I was to think of what I was really putting in my body! Now I pay a little more, but I can feel the difference.”

The best thing to do is to be informed. Look for hidden ingredients and fillers. Look for labels that say “manufactured for” or “distributed by.” Make phone calls and inquiries. Check expiration labels. Talk to doctors and health practitioners about where you can find vitamins without the fillers. In a world where nutrition in food is decreasing, taking the right vitamin is more important now more than ever.

## ■ Can Stress Cause Weight Gain?\*

The model of weight gain that most people are familiar with has to do with consuming too many calories.

You hear it all the time, “don’t eat that or you’ll get fat” or “if you don’t exercise, you’re going to gain weight.”

The foods we eat or lack of exercise are most commonly associated with gaining weight.

You would be hard pressed to find someone saying, “You better calm down or you’re never going to lose all that weight.” But the truth is that stress can and does make you fat.

The model of weight gain that most people are familiar with has to do with consuming too many calories. This model is still relevant for us when we talk about stress, but stress adds a twist to this.



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\* By Anisa Abeytia.



When we are under stress, especially prolonged stress (physical, emotional or environmental) our body's chemistry is changed. This change leads to unhealthy cravings for sweet and salty foods.

### ***Why Salty and Sweet?***

Modern humans have come up with new and unique ways of stressing themselves out. In the past, major stressors consisted of events such as food shortage, illness, pregnancy/child rearing, physical work, exposure to the elements and war.

These events typically weren't everyday experiences and our response was straightforward. Also, these events ended and we had time to recover. This is in addition to the fact that people in the past were very physically active.

Today we have traffic, cell phones, deadlines, noise pollution, picking the children up from school, degenerative diseases, loneliness, depression, war without end and each other to stress over.

Physically we are not adapted to deal with all of this daily stress. Add to that, the fact that many people today are physically inactive and have poor diets and this is nothing less than a recipe for an expanding waistline.

Instead of reducing stressors, using stress reducing techniques or changing our response to stress (reframing), the tendency is to keep going and to self medicate using food. But why food?

The adrenal glands are responsible for our ability to adapt and cope with stress, but when we over burden them, they want a pick me up. Salt feeds the adrenal glands and sugar whips them (as does caffeine).

These foods are the whip and the adrenal glands are the horse. This will keep a person going for a while, but these food cravings and the body's own chemistry won't only cause weight gain, but it can also cause all types of health issues as well.

### ***Adrenaline, Cortisol and Serotonin***

Many times most of the stress we are experiencing is self-inflicted. Either we are doing too much or our response to stress is unhealthy.

There is only so much one can do in one day, but many people have become addicted to that "rush" they feel when they are very busy.

This "rush" is caused by adrenaline or epinephrine produced by the adrenal glands in response to stress and is intended to give us the energy to fight or run away (fight or flight).



Along with the production of adrenaline, the body will also produce cortisol. Slow acting cortisol can cause the most trouble. Adrenaline doesn't last long in the body and we quickly feel the "crash" after a "rush". This is when the food cravings set in.

The over abundance of cortisol can cause havoc on our blood sugar levels and can even contribute to causing diabetes. Also, the longer this process goes on, the harder it will be for the body to recover from this "rush" and "crash" cycle.

The other player in this scenario is serotonin. This neuro-transmitter works in the brain to keep our mood elevated. A common side effect of low serotonin is depression. Serotonin also helps us cope with stress, but can easily become depleted when we are under prolonged stress.

We need to replenish our supplies of serotonin from our diet, so if our diet is low in serotonin abundant foods and high in stress, sugar is a substitute, although a poor and short lived one. A lack of serotonin can cause food cravings. There are also people that do not produce enough serotonin.

### ***What Can You Do?***

You can accomplish this by snacking on healthy foods. It is difficult to curb cravings when you are hungry. Once you reach the level of hunger, you are more likely to grab the easiest thing than the right type of food.

#### **– Snack on healthy foods**

A good snack contains a protein, a fat and a complex carbohydrate (whole grain). It can be cheese and crackers, celery and nut butter (almond, peanut, or cashew), or a bowl of yogurt with fruit and nuts. Have an afternoon and a morning snack.

Interestingly, many of the clients that come to me for weight loss are not eating enough. Once I have them eating more healthy calories and at the appropriate times, they lose weight.

#### **– Eat foods rich in tryptophan (converts to serotonin)**

Tryptophan is an amino acid (found in protein foods). To boost your levels, eat protein rich foods like chicken, turkey, nuts, cheeses and beans.

#### **– Eat at regular times**



Just like us, our bodies do better on a regular schedule. Have your breakfast within an hour of waking up. Have your lunch between 12-1 p.m. and dinner before 6 p.m.

### **– Drink Water**

Stress is a dehydrating experience. Most people under stress also drink large amounts of coffee, tea and soda, all of which are diuretics and add to the body's need for more water.

Calculate your water need by taking your weight and dividing it by two. Your answer will give you the amount of water you need to drink in ounces per day, without stress.

Add a minimum of 16 oz of water per day. Also, if you are not used to drinking this amount of water, do it slowly by drinking 8 oz of water for one week and adding in an additional 8 oz glass each week until you reach your ideal water need.

### **– Choose whole grains**

Whole Grains help regulate the blood sugar, keep us full longer and provide us with long lasting fuel for our brain and body. They also contain high amounts of the B vitamins that are quickly depleted in times of stress. The B vitamins help us cope with stress better.



### **– Don't bring sweets into the house**

If you don't have them, you can't eat them-problem solved. If you find yourself making special trips to the store to satisfy your sweet tooth, then you know you have a problem with sugar.

### **– Sleep and rest**

During times of stress, your body needs time to rest and recover. Stress can drain you physically, mentally and emotionally. Depending on the individual, the amount of sleep and rest required will vary.

### **– Exercise**

Exercise doesn't necessarily mean a physically strenuous activity. Over doing exercise is also a stressor. Be the judge on what type of exercise you find enjoyable and you can also consult with a physical trainer.

In addition to making lifestyle adjustments, pay attention to your response during stressful events. The calming influence of prayer and meditation should not be overlooked.

Prayer, especially regular prayers, in addition to dikr (chanting words of Allah's Remembrance) can reduce the harmful effects of stress on



our body and mind. Make it a habit to remember Allah during times of stress as an effective stress reduction technique.

***This article was first published in December 27, 2009 and is currently republished for its importance.***

## ■ Unwanted Relation between Stress & Big Belly\*

Young or old, thin or big, many Muslims are getting a paunch and have to bear some feelings of heaviness in the abdomen.

But aside from being a nuisance, having a big belly can also lead to serious diseases.

It has been found that if the abdominal muscles do not work well, the entire metabolic system becomes affected. Badly sustained, the organs fall downwards, pulling the spine into an incorrect position.

The intestines become unable to launch exhalation as they should and hence keep the carbon dioxide inside the body, making the renewal of oxygen especially difficult.

A study of 17,150 men also showed the link between abdominal obesity and the risk of developing cataracts. In this study, reported by



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\* By Nora Belfadl.



the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, a big belly was cited as the main risk factor (Eller).

However, contrary to popular belief, lack of exercise is not always the culprit in obesity. Before addressing the issue of exercise, doctors first look at their patient's lifestyle to determine possible causes for digestive troubles. "For most of my patients, the weight gain was due to a digestive disruption," says French dietician Francois Pallardy (Pallardy, p. 5).

The Prophet Mohammed (saws) also commented on the importance of proper eating habits, saying, "**A believer eats in one intestine (is satisfied with little food) and a kafir (unbeliever) or a hypocrite eats with seven intestines.**" (Bukhari). This *hadith* (saying of the Prophet) explains the problem of obesity well. Obesity occurs when people eat too much and too fast, which causes a swollen belly due to constipation or abdominal wind.

The digestive system is a wonderful system. But, to keep it functioning properly, people are advised to reduce their consumption of acidic products that increase the acidity rate in the stomach, which can lead to heartburn and bloating.

Acid-forming foods include: vinegar, red fruits, milk products, some vegetables such as tomatoes and watercress, jams, sweet drinks and

stimulants like coffee and tea, among others. Abdominal wind can also be due to presence of gas in the stomach caused by chewing gums and fizzy drinks like soda (webmd.com).

Moreover, food fermentation often increases if one is continually nervous or anxious, thus causing bloating because stress upsets the bile and insulin production needed to digest the foods.

A Yale University team found a link between chronic psychological stress and fat storage. Stress makes the brain, especially the hypothalamus, secrete an excessive amount of *cortisol*, a stress hormone, which may contribute to a high fat rate or an upset of the insulin rate responsible for diabetes, high cholesterol, and ulcers (webmd.com).

Many experts also believe in the psychological factors of many digestive diseases. “The cause probably has something to do with the stress, which affects the nerves connected to the intestines and cause cramping,” says Thomas M. Ball, an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics at the University of Arizona (webmd.com).

### **Further Progresses & More Hopes**

Furthermore, the development of some bad genes may be halted or slowed down if the person stays relaxed as Dr. Smith advises in his



book *Low-Stress Diet*. Dr. Smith says, “Stresses can allow genetic traits to appear” (Smith, p. 17).

Furthermore, we usually react to stress by smoking, stopping exercise and overeating. Psychiatrists used to say that stress, or the perception of stress, can lead to low blood sugar, thus causing people to overeat. If stressed people are on a diet, they often feel guilty if they overeat; which creates more and varied stresses that can cause them to perceive they are weak and unable to control their bodies.

Learning to accept one’s self will also help us get to know our bodies, making it easier to exert control. Many scientists think that “mind-body” techniques might make a difference in many diseases (Smith, p.20).

Doctors advise that in order to stimulate better digestion, a person should try to reduce stress with imagery techniques. For example, people can imagine themselves relaxing in a calm cottage.

Doctors also advise breathing fresh air, exercising three times a week, and following certain rules while eating. The following guidelines are also recommended:

1. Remember this *Hadith*: “Mention the Name of Allah and eat with your right hand, and eat of the dish what is nearer to you” (Bukhari).
2. Shut the television at mealtime and you will more easily concentrate on your food and become satiated faster.
3. Allow your appetite to dictate eating times. Eat small portions, but as often as you are hungry. As the Prophet (saws) said, “We are people who eat only if we are hungry and when we eat it’s without surfeit.”
4. Avoid cutting out foods and eat mainly fresh foods, for they contain more vitamins, which will quell hunger.
5. Never eat sugar and protein at the same time. Protein should be eaten first, followed by legumes and grains, then vegetables such as salads. “Protein needs acid for its digestion; by ingesting water, fruit, or salad before the protein you dilute the hydrochloric acid” (Smith, p. 67).
6. Have some raw foods with each meal, which are convenient and a good source of Folate and B vitamins.
7. Drink fresh juice and water instead of coffee, tea or soda.
8. By relieving the system of stress, and maintaining good eating habits, a person will notice a real difference in their life. Their energy will increase, their nerves improve, and indigestion symptoms will often disappear.

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## Ask Your Doctor

Deadlines, meetings, emails, phone calls, important files to submit. All these are symptoms of daily business routines that have made workers subjected to the harmful act of having their lunch at their desks or being forced to eating in haste, without having a proper lunch break. Does this sound familiar to you? Do you sometimes eat your breakfast or lunch at your desk? It is clear that this is due to hyper-fast working environment which has left many employees with more work and less time.

Adding to this is the spread of fast-food concept that has also eradicated the previously famous midday lunch break at work. So we all get busy, but we also need to eat. This, thus make us combine working with eating at the same time. But do you know this could be really dangerous? And actually, this could pose a lot of hazards to your health. Our modern life has imposed on us a certain pace that is too hard to cope with and that gets its toll on our physical, mental and psychological health. To tackle this important topic, read below all the questions submitted by the website's users and the kind replies of AboutIslam's guests and specialists:



## ■ **Questions & Answers on Natural Health**

Karima Burns, MH, ND has a Doctorate in Naturopathy and a Masters in Herbal Healing.

She has studied natural healing for 12 years, published a natural healing newsletter for 4 years, and writes extensively on natural healing and herbs.



Sister Karima became interested in natural healing after ending her personal lifelong struggle with asthma, allergies, chronic ear infections, depression, hypoglycemia, fatigue and panic attacks with herbs and natural therapies.

Karima offers natural healing consultations, aromatherapy and reflexology treatments, iridology readings, and nutritional and herbal programs from her home in Saudi Arabia. She believes that healing occurs more rapidly when her clients can work on the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of their illnesses.

**Q: Dear Editor,**

**I was told I am at risk for osteoporosis, but I am allergic to milk and I really hate the idea of taking unnatural substances. Is there anything else I can do to get more Calcium into my bones?  
N.J., Illinois**

Dear N.J.,

We have all been made aware lately of how important calcium is in developing our bones and preventing osteoporosis. However, although our awareness is recent, calcium has been performing this role for thousands of years in many different ways.

Not everyone has milk available to drink yet Allah, in His wisdom, has created many sources for all the vitamins and minerals we need. Those marketing dairy products would like us all to believe that unless we consume milk, cheese, etc., we will lack calcium in our bones, but this is simply not true.

What is true is that there are many things we are not told. Calcium can be found in many sources other than milk; however, it can also be depleted by many things, and we need to consume a kind of calcium that our body can absorb.



As Muslims, we may think of milk first as a main source of calcium because it was so highly respected by the prophet. The Qur'an (16:66) says, "In cattle, there is a lesson for you: We give you the drink they carry in their glands that issues betwixt a secreting mucus and blood." In the Hadith Abu Daud, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) supported this by adding, "I do not know anything that can rival milk or be a substitute, for it is simultaneously both food and drink."

However, it has long been realized by traditional Muslim healers that milk quickly loses its properties unless it is consumed fresh (Medicine of the Prophet, p. 292), and modern science has confirmed this as well as the fact that pasteurization alters the quality of calcium in the milk, oftentimes making it hard to absorb. Furthermore, cows that are fed hormones and proteins produce a different quality of milk than the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) used to consume.

One of our biggest problems concerning our calcium intake is not its quantity, but the canceling out of the calcium we do take in by eating devitalized foods and products. A recent study done on college students showed that the meals they ate contained well over the USRDA (U.S. Recommended Daily Allowance) of calcium, but the majority of the subjects showed a calcium deficiency in their bodies. The study correlated this to the fact that the college students also consumed a large amount of phosphoric sodas, coffee, pizza, hamburger and French fries that was depleting them of the calcium

they had consumed by either leeching it out of their system or by creating an imbalance in the alkaline environment of their bodies (thus forcing the body to release calcium to balance this).

In fact, there are many substances that leech calcium reserves from the body. Excess protein consumption is one way so when we eat cheeseburgers, the meat most likely cancels out the calcium in the cheese. The Jewish religion does not even allow the combination of milk and certain other foods.

The second problem we have is that we may not be absorbing the calcium we do consume. This is a big problem with milk since many people are allergic to it. When you are allergic to a food, your body does not assimilate it as well into the body; it rejects it instead. The body of a person who is allergic to milk sends out antibodies to attack it, instead of absorbing its calcium.

Some of the people that appeared in the "Drink Milk" advertisements, such as President Clinton, were actually allergic to milk. Despite the fact that his medical records show a milk allergy, he still posed for an ad supporting milk as a source of calcium in the body.

Another source of calcium that is often rejected is vitamin and mineral supplements. Many of them, even the ones used by hospitals, are made from non-organic substances or contain allergenic coatings such



as corn or wheat. The best calcium supplements contain bone marrow or oyster.

Some of the best alternative sources of calcium will come as a surprise. A tablespoon of sesame seeds (even in the form of tahini) supplies as much calcium as an eight-ounce glass of milk. Ten figs supply 270mg of calcium; one tablespoon of blackstrap molasses contains 140mg; salmon contains 208mg; and only three and a half ounces of kelp contains 1,093mg.

A good well-rounded meal can also supply a lot of calcium. A dinner of brown rice, broccoli, carrots, and shrimp with a few almonds, for example, contains as much calcium as a glass of milk (310mg). The USRDA for calcium is 800 to 1000mg.

Another wonderful way to supplement our calcium levels is through herbal teas. It is absorbed readily from comfrey and mint. Rosemary Gladstar, in her book *Herbal Healing for Women*, offers the following formula for a calcium tea: 2 parts oat straw, 1 part alfalfa, 2 parts nettle and one-half part horsetail herb.

You can also make your own calcium supplement using a lemon and eggshells. The following recipe is from Ted Morter's book, *Your Health, Your Choice*:

### Lemon Egg

Place a whole, clean, uncooked egg into a clean, wide-mouth jar.

Cover the egg with freshly squeezed lemon.

Cover the jar loosely and place it in the refrigerator.

A few times a day, gently agitate the jar.

After 48 hours, when the bubbling has stopped, carefully remove the egg.

Take one-half teaspoon of this mixture each day as you simultaneously concentrate on re-building your calcium from other sources.

Q: Dear Editor,

**I am new to the natural living lifestyle, and have just started using natural remedies around my house. I find that a lot of these remedies are working, but I am not sure why and I would like to know. For instance, Echinacea actually works better than most of the antibiotics I used to take. Why is that? K.L., Montana**



Der KL,

A Hadith states, "For every malady Allah has created, He also created its cure." Echinacea is one example of the truth in this Hadith. Many people, as you have indicated, have found that it is superior to any pharmaceutical. This is because Allah's pharmacy is created from His supreme knowledge of the way all things work, while our pharmacies are created from our limited range of knowledge.

Although antibiotics are a wonderful tool for many major viruses and have saved many lives, antibiotics have been largely abused. In fact, the main problem with the use of antibiotics is not so much the drugs themselves, but rather, the abuse of them. They were created to treat serious illnesses; however, many people are using them today for illnesses such as colds and the flu.

When they visit the doctor, many patients feel that they need to take something home other than general advice, and many doctors feel this pressure to prescribe their patients something.

The majority of people recover from colds, flu, coughs, stomachaches, fevers, and even ear infections with no intervention whatsoever. However, providing some comfort and support to an ailing body will usually at least make it easier to deal with illness, and perhaps help them recover more quickly.



The problem with antibiotics is that they do not support the natural process of recovery, but instead, they "take over" the job, killing as much bacteria as they can in the body - the good with the bad. Their overuse then creates an environment where good bacteria are weakened, which if they are not replenished, will cause the body to become even more susceptible to illness over time. Also, in a society where antibiotics are overused, the bacteria they are fighting start to adapt to them in their efforts to resist their attack and eventually become completely resistant.



## ■ Let Them Eat Junk!

**Q: Dear Editor**

**I have two questions:**

**First: My daughter is a very picky eater. She is five years old and takes so long to eat. Can you help me?**



**Ask<sup>The</sup>  
Doctor**

**Second: I do my best to provide good food for my children, but they have access to so much junk food around school and elsewhere. What can I do to make them make good food decisions of their own? Shazan**

**Consultant: Hwaa Irfan.**

As salamu `alaykum Shazan

The problems you are facing are typical for a child of that age. They are more physically and active, so they have lots of energy to burn, lots to do, lots to prove and not time to do it all. A friend of mine faced the same problem which meant preparing food for her children not a joyful or thankful task. One affects the other. If your children are going to prove difficult each time you prepare food for them to eat then both you and they children are bound to feel anxious about it all.

My friend's family members were meat eaters, and we were not. For the first time in 11 years, her and her husband had decided to take that long weekend off for themselves. They never had a moment's break, not even time for a honeymoon. So I was the candidate to take on her children so that she could have a well deserved break.

So there we were one weekend with temporary additions to our family, full of boundless energy and generally not used to taking time-out for quiet periods. So an eventful weekend was had with outings to the local (massive park), which I turned into an adventure. We took a picnic, went sailing, climbing, foraging through the forest etc. We returned to make supper and tell "Don't Be Afraid of the Dark" stories and literally turned the reception area into a cave.

What is the point of me sharing this with you?



Well, their days were full of activity and as such had healthy appetites for each meatless mealtime. They ate their fill and whatever was on the plate was where it should be, in their stomachs. They had little appetite in between, but had room for some treats which were already bought in. They would have crisps, one packet of sweets and home-made milk shakes which are rather filling. No more than we would give our daughter. When their parents returned to collect them at the end of the weekend, they naturally thought we must have had a difficult time as far as food was concerned, but they were surprised that they were bursting to tell them what they did and that there were no food complaints.

The long and short of it all is when children make the most of their day, and eat full meals at meal times, they are less likely to eat junk, because fresh fruits, vegetable long with pulses and grains are filling foods because they contain lots of roughage which provides the bulk from plant food for the digestive system to work on. This does not mean that your children should not eat meat, but it just goes to show, how much junk food provides empty calories that do not satisfy ones hunger. This makes treats remain treats and not alternatives to food. With our daughter at that age, I never bought treats with her around so that she would not develop that habit that she could have what she wanted. What I did was to but in treats for the week and in this way, these treats would be considered allowable, and not the forbidden that she would hanker after.

By establishing a pattern at home, your children will develop the habit of eating at mealtimes, which also sets up a pattern for their digestive system. In this way, they will unconsciously become food-wise because they develop a limit as to what they can eat and how much in between mealtimes.

In the U.K. they are developing a trend of returning back to family mealtimes instead of take-aways as a means to overcome their growing problem of obesity. By eating together as a family, there is a more relaxed environment with less distractions as to who-is-doing-what, - and - if –they - can - I - can – too syndrome. In a relaxed state one eats more, enjoys more what one is eating and is more able to digest properly.



## ■ The Golden Rule on Sweets!

**Name of Questioner:** Umm  
'Ali.

**Question:** What is a good rule of thumb for how often children should be allowed sweets? If it were up to my kids, they'd eat them for breakfast; if it were up to me, they wouldn't have any at all. We need to find a compromise.



**Consultant:** Mona Salama.

As salamu 'alaykum,

Dear sister, great are the responsibilities that lies upon the mother's shoulders, not only does she care for her children's faith, manners, studies, friends, chase them all the time for prayers, but also their health, fitness and nutrition. It is very important for a child or a grown up to eat a healthy balanced diet as this is the way where our bodies can maintain good levels of each nutrient. Thank God that this mission, although sometimes difficult, yet it is one of life's pleasures.

When it comes to food, it is imperative that we teach our children healthy eating patterns as we can't watch them all the time. These patterns are taught from their early childhood where the taste buds start before they develop bad habits.

Looking at any Food Pyramid Guide, you will get a good idea about the right percentage and amount of food from different food groups. It is also so clear that sweets are on the top of the pyramid as they are needed in the least amount possible.

Consuming a lot of sweets may lead to obesity as they contain a lot of calories, and unfortunately they are Empty Calories (without beneficial vitamins and minerals your body needs to grow and keep working like it should.) Sweets are also the cause of a lot of cavities. Eating sweets in excess can affect their mood and cause them to be hyper active and nervous and later they will be lethargic.

Sometimes (in fact a lot of times) it is our fault that they eat sweets in excess as we use it as a bribe so they will do something or behave in a particular way.

Other children consume a lot of sweets not just because they taste good, but also because sweets make them feel good, so dealing with the reasons is a part of the solution.



So, the rule of thumb that you asked for is:

"Try to make sweets a sometimes treat rather than every day.

"Don't use it as a reward anymore (research has shown that a child's preference for a given food increases significantly when the food is presented as a reward) but instead use non-edible ones e.g. a sticker chart, an activity he's been looking forward to, social rewards (attention, recognition, praise, and thanks) affirm a child's worth etc.

"Encourage your child to enjoy natural sweet and delicious foods like fruits, and emphasize that fruits not only taste great but also help to keep the body healthy and strong.

"Give him a good mix of fruits, vegetables, protein foods, dairy foods, and grains. Then, there will naturally be a smaller part left for the bad stuff in his diet.

"Choose sugar free candies whenever possible, and make compromises, e.g. you can have a small serve of cake or a piece of candy or a small cup of soft drink but not all of them and not daily. (Note that soft drinks usually have a lot of sugar in them which you do not need, they are also dangerous to our bodies on the long run especially those which contain cola).



“In helping our children developing healthy habits it is not right to eliminate sweets totally from their diet...

“First, this will lead to the opposite result and they may eventually love it even more.

“Second, this could push them to lie while eating it behind your back which is much more serious problem as fixing teeth is much easier than "fixing" manners.

So moderation and balance are the key words here. This world is created in balance and so was our bodies, try not to spoil this balance

And finally - Any good is from Allah and any mistakes are from myself.



## ■ How to Avoid the Charm of Junk Food Ads on Kids?

**Name of Questioner:** Mother

**Question:** I know that fast food, sweets, and potato chips are among the most common reasons for children obesity. However, it is really tough to abandon these things in the time that children see their ads everywhere. What do you think?



**Counselor:** Karima K Burns.

Salam Dear Sister,

Thank you so much for asking this question as I believe many parents have the same worry nowadays with the advertising industry growing at exponential speed especially for junk foods. Hope you benefit from the advice below by Dr. Karima Burns.

**Develop Their Sense of Taste**

Children, when exposed to many healthy nutritious foods more often than unhealthy ones, will develop a better sense of taste. This sense of taste will allow them to distinguish the difference between "real food" and "fake food".

Make sure that children learn how "real food" tastes from a young age.

- Baby food should be processed by hand or smashed up from freshly cooked homemade foods and not fed to children from jars or cans.
- Toddler snacks should consist of foods like sliced apples, grapes, bits of quality cheeses and fresh breads and not packaged nutrition bars, snack crackers or cereals.
- As children grow older and want to try things like hamburgers, ice cream, chocolates, sweets and potato chips, introduce them to the homemade "healthier" versions first.

A child who is raised on mostly healthy and whole foods will naturally migrate back to those foods and will prefer them. You will notice a child who has been raised this way will not even want a hamburger from a fast food place. They will taste it and say "Yuck, this doesn't taste like a hamburger."



### **How to Avoid Junk Food Ads**

- Children may see ads on TV or in the supermarket, but parents still have control over what they are eating for a long time. Use this control to purchase the best foods for them and provide them with only healthy choices at home. If you don't buy it and have it around, they won't eat it.

If they find it difficult to shop without asking for treats then leave them at home with a babysitter, sibling, father or relative while you shop. If they watch TV have them watch videos rather than cable to reduce their exposure to commercials.

**The medical recommendations and advices stated in the previous specialised responses are publicly general and purely based on the limited and the personal information that was provided in the questions for each case. You are strongly advised to seek face-to-face counseling and consult your physician or therapist when making a drastic change in your lifestyle in terms of behavior, medication or diet etc.**