

HEALTH IN ISLAM

Healthy Kids, Successful Students, Stronger Communities

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What is Health Promotion?

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over the determinants of health and thereby improve their health. This definition is based on the World Health Organization Ottawa Charter 1986.

The health promotion profession has evolved alongside, and in response to, the international health promotion movement and the broader new public health movement. Health promotion not only embraces actions directed at strengthening the skills and capabilities of individuals but also actions directed towards changing social, environmental, political and economic conditions to alleviate their impact on populations and individual health.

"Health promotion is the process of helping people to take control over their lives so that they can choose options that are health giving rather than those that are health risky."

Healthy Living

The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight isn't short-term dietary changes; it's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity.

- **Assessing Your Weight**

BMI and waist circumference are two screening tools to estimate weight status and potential disease risk.

- **Healthy Weight**

A high BMI can be an indicator of high body fatness. Visit the *Healthy Weight Website*; learn about balancing calories, losing weight, and maintaining a healthy weight.

- **Choose My Plate**

Healthy eating habits are a key factor for a healthy weight. Visit the *Choose My Plate Website*; look up nutritional information of foods, track your calorie intake, plan meals, and find healthy recipes.

- **Physical Activity Basics**

Physical activity is important for health and a healthy weight. Learn about different kinds of physical activity and the guidelines for the amount needed each day.

- **Tips for Parents**

Learn about the seriousness of childhood obesity and how to help your child establish healthy behaviors.

Nutrition and the Health of Young People

- Proper nutrition promotes the optimal growth and development of children.
- Healthy eating helps prevent high cholesterol and high blood pressure and helps reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes.
- Healthy eating helps reduce one's risk for developing obesity, osteoporosis, iron deficiency, and dental caries (cavities).
- Healthy eating is associated with reduced risk for many diseases, including several of the leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.
- Healthy eating in childhood and adolescence is important for proper growth and development and can prevent health problems such as obesity, dental caries, iron deficiency, and osteoporosis.
- Schools are in a unique position to promote healthy eating and help ensure appropriate food and nutrient intake among students. For example, as a healthy alternative to sugar-sweetened beverages, schools can provide students access to safe, free drinking water.
- Schools should ensure that only nutritious and appealing foods and beverages are provided in school cafeterias, vending machines, snack bars, school stores, and other venues that offer food and beverages to students. In addition, nutrition education should be part of a comprehensive school health education curriculum.

Benefits of Healthy Eating

- Proper nutrition promotes the optimal growth and development of children.
- Healthy eating helps prevent high cholesterol and high blood pressure and helps reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes.
- Healthy eating helps reduce one's risk for developing obesity, osteoporosis, iron deficiency, and dental caries (cavities).

Eating Behaviors of Young People

- Empty calories from added sugars and solid fats contribute to 40% of daily calories for children and adolescents aged 2–18 years, affecting the overall quality of their diets. Approximately half of these empty calories come from six sources: soda, fruit drinks, dairy desserts, grain desserts, pizza, and whole milk.
- Adolescents drink more full-calorie soda per day than milk. Males aged 12–19 years drink an average of 22 ounces of full-calorie soda per day, more than twice their intake of fluid milk (10 ounces), and females drink an average of 14 ounces of full-calorie soda and only 6 ounces of fluid milk.

Consequences of a Poor Diet

- A poor diet can lead to energy imbalance (e.g., eating more calories than one expends through physical activity) and can increase one's risk for overweight and obesity.
- A poor diet can increase the risk for lung, esophageal, stomach, colorectal, and prostate cancers.
- Individuals who eat fast food one or more times per week are at increased risk for weight gain, overweight, and obesity.
- Drinking sugar-sweetened beverages can result in weight gain, overweight, and obesity.
 - Providing access to drinking water gives students a healthy alternative to sugar-sweetened beverages.

Hunger and *food insecurity* (i.e., reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns because a household lacks money and other resources for food) might increase the risk for lower dietary quality and under nutrition. In turn, under nutrition can negatively affect overall health, cognitive development, and school performance.

Health & Academics

Healthy Students Are Better Learners

Health-related factors such as hunger, physical and emotional abuse, and chronic illness can lead to poor school

performance. Health-risk behaviors such as early sexual initiation, violence, and physical inactivity are consistently linked to poor grades and test scores and lower educational attainment.

Leading national education organizations recognize the close relationship between health and education, as well as the need to foster health and well-being within the educational environment for all students.

Schools are the Right Place for a Healthy Start

Schools play a critical role in promoting the health and safety of young people and helping them establish lifelong healthy behaviors. Research also has shown that school health programs can reduce the prevalence of health risk behaviors among young people and have a positive effect on academic performance. CDC analyzes research findings to develop guidelines and strategies for schools to address health risk behaviors among students and creates tools to help schools implement these guidelines.

Spotlight On

Healthy Kids, Successful Students, Stronger Communities.

Public health and education professionals can use these tools to communicate the link between healthy eating, physical activity, and improved academic achievement to engage stakeholders in supporting healthy school environments. Schools, health agencies, parents, and communities share a common goal of supporting the link between healthy eating, physical activity, and improved academic achievement of children and adolescents. Evidence shows that the health of students is linked to their academic achievement, so by working together, we can ensure that young people are healthy and ready to learn. 1-4 Public health and education professionals can use this resource to share the link between healthy eating, physical activity, and improved academic achievement to engage stakeholders in working together to support healthy school environments. This resource includes

1. **Evidence** linking healthy eating and physical activity with academic achievement.
2. Evidence-driven **messages** with specific benefits to states, school districts, schools, parents, and students.
3. Specific, feasible, and effective **actions** to support healthy eating and physical activity in schools.
4. Key **resources** to learn more.

Academic Achievement

For this document, we define academic achievement as²

1. *Academic performance* (class grades, standardized tests, and graduation rates).

2. *Education behavior* (attendance, dropout rates, and behavioral problems at schools).

3. *Students' cognitive skills and attitudes* (concentration, memory, and mood).

Evidence on physical activity and academic achievement

- Students who are physically active tend to have better grades, school attendance, cognitive performance (e.g., memory), and classroom behaviors (e.g., on-task behavior).
- Higher physical activity and physical fitness levels are associated with improved cognitive performance (e.g., concentration, memory) among students.
- More participation in physical education class has been associated with better grades, standardized test scores, and classroom behavior (e.g., on-task behavior) among students.
- Increased time spent for physical education does not negatively affect students' academic achievement.

the importance of increased access to healthy foods and physical activities in schools as ways to enhance the academic achievement of students.

How to use core messages:

- Use messages when communicating with different audiences at both the state and local level (e.g., parents, schools, teachers, administrators, public health professionals).
- Incorporate at least 1–2 core messages in all communication to support both healthy eating and physical activity strategies in schools.

Core Messages:

1. Healthy students are better learners

• Healthy students are better on all levels of academic achievement: academic performance, education behavior, and cognitive skills and attitudes.

2. Schools can influence eating and physical activity behaviors

• Students spend much of their time at school, and may eat as many as 2 out of 3 meals per day and may get much of their physical activity at school.

3. Healthy, successful students help build strong communities

• Investing in the health of students contributes to healthy communities in the future.

4. All students deserve the opportunity to be healthy and successful

• Providing access to healthy foods and physical activity plays an important role in the academic achievement of students.

Audience-Specific Messages

The audience-specific messages reflect the benefits of addressing healthy eating and physical activity in schools for each stakeholder audience.

How to use audience messages:

• Add these messages to the core messages when communicating to specific stakeholder audiences in all communication (conversation, PowerPoints, Webinars, meetings, presentations, Web content, e-mails, newsletters, print documents).

• Use messages to support both healthy eating and physical activity strategies in schools.

Islam and health

God designed and created humankind for the specific purpose of worshipping Him and sent Prophets and Messengers with specific guidance to make our task easy. However, without God's guide to life, humankind can become lost and adrift in a world that does not make a lot of sense or offer any real security and contentment. Lives are lived without purpose or meaning and many people seek out an existence that provides little or no real sense of having a *life worth living*.

The traditions of Prophet Muhammad teach us to cherish good health and realise its true value as one of God's countless bounties.

“And when your Lord proclaimed, “If you give thanks, I will give you more; but if you are thankless, lo! My punishment is dire.” (Quran 14:7)

Islam's holistic approach to health includes treating our bodies with respect and nourishing them with, not only faith, but also with lawful, nutritious food. A major part of living life according to the Creator's instructions is implementing a suitable diet. Choosing wholesome food and avoiding the unwholesome is essential to good health. God says in the Quran, “**Eat of the good things which We have provided for you.**” (Quran 2:172) “**Eat of what is lawful and wholesome on the earth.**” (Quran 2:168)

The Quran contains many verses of advice about healthy eating that relate to the interconnectedness of physical and spiritual health. Encouragement to eat only good and pure food is often combined with warnings to remember God and avoid Satan. Healthy eating not only satisfies hunger but also has an effect on how well we worship.

“O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.” (Quran 2:168)

If one becomes obsessed with food or indulges in too much unwholesome or junk food he or she may become physically weak or distracted from his primary purpose of serving God. On the other hand, if one concentrated exclusively on spiritual endeavours and neglected their health and nutrition, weakness injury or illness would also result in failure to carry out obligatory worship. The guidance found in the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad advise humankind to maintain a balance between these two extremes.

A healthy diet is balanced with a mixture of all the foods God has provided for His creation. The variety satisfies all the body's needs for carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins, proteins, fats and amino acids. Numerous verses of Quran mention the foods God has provided for us to nourish and maintain our bodies. It is not an exhaustive list of dietary requirements but rather a general idea of the types of food that maintain a healthy body and prevent illness.

“He created cattle that give you warmth, benefits and food to eat.” (Quran 16:5)

“It is He who subdued the seas, from which you eat fresh fish.” (Quran 16:14)

“It is He who sends down water from the sky with which He brings up corn, olives, dates and grapes and other fruit.” (Quran 16:11)

“In cattle too you have a worthy lesson. We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies, between the undigested food and blood: pure milk, a pleasant beverage for those who drink it.” (Quran 16:66)

“There emerges from their bellies a drink, varying in colors, in which there is healing for people. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who give thought. .” (Quran 16:69)

“And it is He Who produces gardens trellised and untrellised, and date palms, and crops of different shape and taste (its fruits and its seeds) and olives, and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in taste). Eat of their fruit when they ripen...” (Quran 6:141)

“...and from it (the earth) we produced grain for their sustenance.” (Quran 36:33)

God has also provided us with a list of foods that are forbidden and apart from these everything else is considered lawful.

“Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead animals - cattle-beast not slaughtered, blood, the flesh of swine, and the meat of that which has been slaughtered as a sacrifice for other than God...” (Quran 5:3) “...and intoxicants.” (Quran 5:91-92)

What Islam teaches about healthy lifestyle?

A healthy and happy life is no accident, in addition to healthy genes it depends on good habits of mind and body. By

following Islamic teachings one is already adopting good habits of mind and body. Take for example the beliefs how they nurture positive attitudes, worship and rituals how they train a person to take seriously social responsibilities and moral values how they help in building personal relationships. Similarly, by expressly forbidding drinking alcohol, smoking, gambling and eating pork, Islam has laid solid foundations for a healthy lifestyle, a safe and hygienic way of living. Let me give you a few more examples to make the point even clearer:

- The cleaning of teeth, the washing of hands, face and feet five times before prayer promotes hygiene.
- The practice of cutting nails, trimming moustache and shaving pubic hair are also important steps towards hygiene.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged people to have a good breakfast early in the morning, to always have a light supper in the evening and discouraged over eating. He (peace be upon him) would say “Fill the stomach one third with food, one third with water and leave one third empty.” The Quran infact forbids overeating: **“eat and drink but do not over eat”** (Al-Araf: 31).

The Prophet (p.b.u.h) constantly preached the message of health, he knew that healthy bodies carry healthy souls. On one occasion he (peace be upon him) said: “The example of the stomach is like a pond. There are outlets in all directions from it. If the stomach is healthy then the rest of body will be healthy”. He (p.b.u.h) also said: “The stomach is a place of diseases” meaning diseases start from here and thus emphasising the kind of food we eat and the amount we consume. The best policy he suggested was to eat little when you are really hungry.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught how we need to be careful with the food we eat. He said! “Always keep covered the food” so it's protected from airborne germs. Anyone who came in contact with lepers (a contagious disease) was told to stay a meter away from them so as to avoid catching the disease. Similarly, he (peace be upon him) taught “that people from an area of plague should not go to another area that was free of plague.” Thus laying foundations for the idea of “Quarantine”.

In addition to these preventative measures the Prophet (peace be upon him) also gave guidelines for; healthy eating, being active, doing physical exercise and maintaining psychological well-being through faith and hope.

The health benefits of fasting

Although the primary purpose of fasting is ‘so that you may develop taqwa’ Fasting brings about a complete physiological change, giving rest for the digestive tract and the central nervous system. Iftar, and indeed suhur, should consist of meals low in fat and high in carbohydrates, to sustain one for

worship and help to trim the waistline. Also increase vegetables and lower the meat consumption.

Another practice which not only earns us spiritual reward but also ensures we keep fit and healthy in Ramadan is tarawih. This is both an important social gathering in the masjid and an illuminating opportunity to allow the Glorious Quran to penetrate the heart. This is the longest form of congregational worship lasting well over an hour depending on the speed of the imam's recitation. The repeated cycles of sitting and standing (twenty for tarawih itself and another nine for the farḍ 'isha', sunnah and congregational witr prayers) is equivalent to walking a good three miles. tarawih burns 200 calories and is considered a mild form of exercise.

Islamic teachings & Modern Medicine

“A Muslim eats in one intestine (stomach) whereas a non-believer eats in seven intestines.”

Islam is the religion of all times and places. By practicing its laws Muslims all over the world not only attain spirituality but the pinnacle of all other glories and gain the wealth of health.

There is a great inter-relationship between modern medicine and some of our Islamic teachings.

Every verse of the Qur'an is in fact a divine experience of the ultimate reality and science is just an effort made towards realizing this miraculous reality. ***“We have revealed to you the Scripture so that it might be a clear evidence for every thing.”*** (Qur'an,16:89)

PRAYERS:

“Allah denounces those who are careless in their prayers and offer them only for show.” (Qur'an,107:4-6)

The blessed Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) told us: “Prayers are certainly health promoting.”

Although the real purpose of prayers is the worship to Allah, yet there are a large number of additional benefits also.

You see the Islamic Prayer performed at least 5 times a day consists of physical movements of standing still, then bowing to a 90 degree angle, then rising again, then prostrating, then to a sitting posture, and then prostrating again.

EXERCISE:

As we eat three times daily we need exercise to lessen the cholesterol in the body which increases in blood after meals, thickens blood and leads to the deposition of slit in the arteries.

In addition to saving us from our sins and elevating us to the heights of spirituality prayers are great help in maintaining our physical health. They keep our body active, help digestion and save us from muscle and joint diseases through regular balanced exercise. They help the circulation of blood and also mitigate the bad effect of cholesterol. Prayers play a vital role

in acting as a preventive measure against heart attack, paralyses, premature senility, dementia, loss of control on sphincters, diabetes mellitus etc.

The arrangement of prayers is such that those at the time of empty stomach are brief but those after meals are longer and give more exercise to the body.

Salah :- Salah is like head on the body of a Muslim. Also it is proved as the best exercise & there are few Salah actions which resemble yoga. Which is being done by muslims in five times a day.

During the month of Ramadan, the additional twenty units of prayer each night (Tarawih) are added to the late evening prayers because more than normal food is usually consumed after breaking fast.

The performance of prayers put almost all muscles of the body in action. Different groups of muscles are activated while performing prayers. During prostration, blood supply to the brain is improved. One of the useful methods to strengthen the muscles of the knee joints to mitigate the strain on knees in osteoarthritis is the regular exercise of these muscles during prayers.

HEART:

This vital organ of the body has to be always healthy and efficient as it is responsible for the circulation of blood. Diseased heart results in deterioration of the healthy body. Yet it was simply told to us fourteen hundred years ago by our great Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

“Verily in the body there is such a piece of flesh that if it remains alright the whole body keeps well, but if this piece of flesh develops some defect the whole body becomes unhealthy. Behold,- this piece of flesh – it is heart.”(Bukhari, Muslim)

SIESTA:

It was the habit of our blessed Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to sleep for a while after lunch, his companions also followed this practice. This short nap gives relief to the vital organs of the body like heart and brain.

MODERATION IN FOOD:

Both Qur'an and Hadith have touched this topic, Allah tells us in the Qur'an

“O children of Adam, look to your adornment of every place of worship and eat and drink but not in an extravagant manner Lo! Allah does not love the prodigal.”(Qur'an,7:30)

Strengthening this order, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)has strictly forbidden over eating in the following Hadith:

“It is enough to eat few morsels of food to keep one’s back straight.”

It has been proved beyond doubt that over eating is the root of many diseases and also responsible for premature senility. It produces obesity, predisposes to dangerous diseases like diabetes, Menitus, hypertension, coronary heart disease and paralysis.

DIABETES MELLITUS:

This is due to insulin deficiency. Overeating gets the special cells of the pancreas (islets of Langerhans) over worked so it cannot meet the increased demand for insulin. Those cells may get tired, atrophy and causes deficiency of insulin.

PARALYSIS, CORONARY HEART DISEASE & PREMATURE SENILITY:

Their basic course is the narrowing of the coronary arteries. Paralysis is the natural result of blocking of an artery in the brain, should this happen in the heart Myocardial infarction results. Premature senility is installed when the majority of the arteries in the body get narrowed.

Split in the form of cholesterol and triglycerides is deposited in the arteries. Over eating increases blood cholesterol levels. Pork and beef contain high cholesterol values while on the other hand birds have the least amount. Qur’an mentioned that birds meat is one of the specialties of Paradise.

Olive has been repeatedly mentioned in Qur’an, and statistics shows that heart attacks occur more in Northern Italy where they use butter and margarine for cooking than in Southern Italy where olive oil is generally used.

Patients suffering from narrowing of the coronary artery usually develop the heart attack after a heavy meal.

1. Blood:

Ingested blood on reaching the intestine is acted upon by various bacteria normally present there resulting in poisonous products like ammonia which is toxic to the liver. Therefore, God has forbidden us to eat or drink blood and has prescribed such a method for slaughtering animals that most of their blood is drained.

2. Pork

There are two harmful worms harbored by pigs, one is “TAENIASOLIUM” which on ingestion passes to the brain and causes epilepsy. The other one is “TRICHINELLASPIRALIS” which passes to the muscles and brain causing muscular swelling and pain and also epilepsy. Pork has more fat and cholesterol than any other meat.

3. Alcohol:

Numerous diseases have been attributed to alcohol like dyspeptic trouble, peptic ulceration, cancer stomach,

pancreatic, cirrhosis liver, vitamin deficiency and coronary heart disease.

Circumcision (Khatana)

One of the criteria of Islamic hygiene is that every Muslim should be circumcised. This is medically suggested now a days as a toxic substance called Smegma may collect under the redundant skin causing cancer of the genitalia in both man and his wife, inflammation of the penis, phthisis, sticking of the redundant skin over the urethral opening leading to difficulty in urination.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught us to wash our private areas after using the bathroom as well as using toilet paper.

This beneficial hygienic custom saves us from Pilonidal sinus which is an abscess with hair inside occurring near anal opening.

Pyelonephritis: This is more in women due to the proximity of the urethral opening to the anus so toilet paper while being used may bring germs like E. coli to the urethra..

PREVENTING INFECTION:

Infection may be transmitted through dirty hands or dirty food. Therefore, it is essential to wash our hands before and after meals. Although the scientific realities which prove this point weren’t known until recently, our blessed Prophet told us 1400 years ago:

“It is a blessing to wash your hands before and after meals”(Abu Daud & Tirmizi)

He has also advised us not to clean our hands with a towel before meals as they may convey infection from one person to the other particularly viral diseases like infective hepatitis or bacterial infection like Typhoid dysenteries and cholera.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said “Whosoever gets up from slumber should not dip his hand in any utensil unless he washes them three times, because no one knows what he has been touching during sleep.” (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Nisai)

These articles should be handled with great care. If the food is in open utensil they should be covered to avoid contamination. Stressing this our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said

“Cover up the utensils and tie the mouth of the water skins.”(Bukhari, Muslim)

He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, ***“Why did you not cover the utensil carrying the milk even if-it was with a piece of wood.”***

When sharing a drinking skin the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade his companions from blowing in the skin.

DENTAL HYGIENE:

Particular stress has been laid by our Prophet on this as it is very important in the prevention of disease. He attached great importance to

“Miswak”(toothbrush) a twig of a tree used for brushing teeth. **“If I had not thought this to be a hardship for my followers I would have prescribed the use of Miswak before each prayer.”** (Bukhari, Muslim)

According to modern dentistry the best method of using a Miswak or a tooth brush is up and down the length of the teeth and this exactly the way our Prophet used his Miswak.

KHILLALA:

The blessed Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said **“Whosoever eats should pick bits and pieces from in between his teeth.”**

Covering the head and neck as our *Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)* used to do, mitigate the danger of hyperpyrexia which is due to imbalance of the heat control centre situated in the hind brain, which may lead to death.

CONSTIPATION:

The blessed Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) advised that while defecating to keep pressure on the left foot or lean to the left (Tabrani). In squatting position this maneuvers will cause pressure on the descending colon. Medically this helps evacuation of feces from the descending colon thus relieving constipation, particularly when muscles of the abdomen are weak.

EPIDEMIC PREVENTION:

Hygiene is very important. Cleanliness prevent infection entering the citadel of human body and this guards us against ill health and epidemics Allah ordered our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in Sura Al-Muddathir:

“O, Prophet keep your apparel clean and meticulously avoid filth and rubbish.”

Our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

“Allah Almighty is Himself pure and likes purity, God Himself is clean and likes cleanliness.”(Tirmizi)

“Allah Almighty dislikes filth, dirt and disheveled hair (upon a person).”

“No one should urinate in standing water.”(Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood)

“If any one of you yawns, cover your mouth with hands.”(Muslim, Abu Dawood)

“Cleanliness is half of faith” (Bukhari). This is clear through looking at the habits of the Prophet himself. It is sad that many non-Muslims look at Islam as a barbaric backward religion and the reality is that Muslims were the pioneers in health, cleanliness and hygiene. I will conclude this paper with the Hadith of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). **“Two blessings are generally disregarded by people; free time and health. (so take care of them well)”** (Bukhari)

There are many priceless gems of knowledge in the Qur’an and Hadith from which man can benefit immensely. These are but brief facts of medicine which have been mentioned before in Qur’an and Hadith and there is a lot more to be discovered and studied.

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