

For a healthy Ramadan

Ramadan is a month when we strive to seek spiritual rejuvenation. It is also a month that puts our physical endurance level to the test, given that we have to fast all through the day and that the times of meals are different from the rest of the year. But it's not really that big a deal either, given you take proper preparations.

Chowdhury Tasneem Hasin, in-charge of Dietetics and Nutrition at United Hospital, says that fluid consumption must be ample. "Given the hot and humid weather, water/fluids intake is extremely vital. If the general requirement is 2-2.5 litres a day, it should now rise to about 2.5-3 litres."

Every individual is different; and based on medical history, we need to tailor our Ramadan diet accordingly.

So, if you are a cardiac patient, opt for a lot of fibrous food to get a better grip of your lipid profile. And you must vigorously strive to avoid deep fried food - which, unfortunately, is a hot favourite during iftars. Hasin asks to choose an alternative.

"A lot of the food we eat during iftar is in fact high in nutrition, like 'begooni' and 'bora'. But when they are served deep fried, it is a different story," she said. "It's not that you have to eliminate these items from the menu. Take a non-stick fry pan and shallow fry them. The taste will be similar - in fact, I think they taste better that way sometimes."

And then of course, there is a tendency in many households to reuse cooking oil. This too, must not be practiced.

Avoiding deep fried food is not just good advice for cardiac patients; it is also very important for those who suffer from acid reflux.

On the other hand, if you are an expectant mother, you might be facing the dilemma whether you should fast or not. Consult your nutritionist. S/he will take into

consideration many factors, like the stage of your pregnancy: for example, the second trimester is a crucial time, given that baby's growth during that period is very high. There must not be any kind of nutritional deficiency during pregnancy, whether you fast or not.

Meanwhile, the dilemma of fasting is also faced by lactating mothers. "The nutritional quality of breast milk must not be affected, particularly on the first six months when the baby is entirely dependent on mother's milk," Hasin explained. Again, it is the physician who can provide custom-made answers for you.

Patients suffering from Irregular Bowel Syndrome (IBS) also need to be careful about their diet. There is no particular set of food that triggers this problem. Instead, the food to avoid varies between IBS patients. For some, fried food causes problem and for others, it is milk-based products and so on.



So, the best way to be safe is to know the items you must to avoid. Find alternatives. So, if sugar intake needs to be curbed, go for honey instead. Generally speaking, dates, honey, oats and Isabgol, locally known as 'eshup guul er bhushi', are some of the things you should include in your diet.

Diabetic patients also need to be cautious about their food intake. "Complex carbohydrates are good for diabetic patients. Dates are great, given that the sugar level is under control. Eat food that are high in fibre," Hasin advises.

For diabetic patients and cardiac patients as well, it's never a good idea to eat one huge iftar meal. Give up gluttony! And break down the large meal into smaller ones.

Finally, for all of us, it is important to take the weather into consideration. "This

hot and humid season - with high temperatures and moisture in the air and also the rain - is fantastic for bacterial growth. We must remain extra-cautious not just about the food we eat outside, but also about the safety and hygiene of the food that comes from our own kitchen," Hasin concluded.

This year, may our health not fail us during the spiritual month. And let not fasting and all the activities this month entails, deteriorate our health in anyway. Amen!

By M H Haider

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Special thanks to Chowdhury Tasneem Hasin, in-charge of Dietetics and Nutrition at United Hospital Ltd, for her expert and valuable contribution.



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