

THE SPIRITUAL AND EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MODERATION AND PROPER EATING IN ISLAM

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Abstract

This article analyzes the spiritual and hygienic importance of proper eating, moderation, and thorough chewing in Islamic teachings. Based on religious sources, hadiths, and modern medical research, it explains the physiological, psychological, and spiritual benefits of eating less. The article scientifically discusses the harmful consequences of overeating—such as cardiovascular, hepatic, and digestive system disorders. Furthermore, it highlights how improper nutrition affects mental balance and willpower, and explores the bioenergetic value of chewing. In Islam, eating in moderation is considered not only a guarantee of physical health but also a means of spiritual purification, patience, and intellectual cultivation. The paper emphasizes the relevance of Islamic medical-ethical principles in ensuring harmony between the body and the soul.

Keywords: Islamic teachings, proper nutrition, moderation in eating, eating etiquette, chewing culture, bioenergetics, digestive system, occupational hygiene, mental stability, healthy lifestyle, Ibn Sina, Qur'an, hadith.

Introduction

Human health and mental stability are directly linked to proper nutrition, moderation in eating, and the culture of thorough chewing. This process is not only biological but also deeply spiritual. In Islamic teachings, eating itself is viewed as an act of worship, since the human body is a sacred trust (amanah) granted by Allah. Preserving it through pure, moderate, and beneficial foods is a moral duty of every Muslim.

1. The Physiological and Spiritual Benefits of Eating Less and Chewing Properly

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“The son of Adam fills no vessel worse than his stomach. A few morsels are sufficient to keep his back straight.”

These words are not merely ethical advice but contain profound scientific meaning. Researchers have found that chewing food well mixes it more effectively with enzymes, facilitates digestion, and allows the body to fully absorb nutrients. As mentioned in traditional sources, the act of chewing activates acupuncture points in the mouth, allowing food energy to flow throughout the body. Thus, chewing has both physical and bioenergetic significance. Proper chewing provides the following benefits:

- Reduces the load on the digestive organs;
- Eases the function of the stomach, liver, kidneys, and pancreas;
- Helps prevent obesity, diabetes, allergies, and even mental disorders;
- Encourages moderation, as the body receives adequate energy more efficiently.

Hence, prophets and scholars warned:

“He who takes large bites and does not chew properly walks the path toward madness.”

2. The Religious and Scientific Harms of Overeating

The Holy Qur'an states:

“Eat and drink, but do not be excessive. Indeed, Allah does not love those who are excessive.”(Surah Al-A 'raf, 7:31).

This verse reminds humankind that extravagance—not only financially but also in eating—leads to destruction, both physically and spiritually. Overeating overworks the digestive system, burdens the heart, slows circulation, and contributes to vascular constriction and various diseases.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said:

“The glutton and the one with a swollen belly will not enter Paradise.”

This hadith warns believers to control their desires, preserve health, and maintain the divine balance established by Allah.

3. Improper Nutrition as the Root of Addiction and Mental Disorders

Scientists have found that people who fail to chew food properly are more prone to smoking, alcohol consumption, nervous disorders, and depression. Poor digestion disrupts the functions of the liver, heart, and spleen, which in turn negatively affects the psyche.

In Islam, every organ of the body is a trust from Allah. Protecting them means preserving one's mental and spiritual balance.

4. Harmony Between Mind, Soul, and Body

Moderation in eating, proper nutrition, and mindful chewing cultivate patience, discipline, and reflection. These habits keep the ego (nafs) under control. Therefore, correct eating is not only a medical principle but also a path to spiritual purification. Ibn Sina (Avicenna) also emphasized strict order in diet—timing of fruits and meat, and when to drink water—demonstrating the harmony between divine wisdom and scientific reasoning.

Main Section

Insufficient Chewing

The digestion of carbohydrates, organic acids, aromatic substances, and salts begins in the mouth with saliva. During chewing, they mix with enzymes, and a portion is absorbed through tiny vessels in the mouth.

The digestion of complex carbohydrates starts in the mouth and continues in the stomach with the help of these enzymes. Information gathered in the mouth about the chemical composition of the food is sent to the brain center. The brain analyzes this message and prepares the digestion program for the food. Therefore, the chewing process is considered very important. The better the food is chewed, the more completely the brain analyzes it and prepares the digestive system accordingly. The taste and smell of well-chewed food should spread fully in the mouth and reach a creamy liquid (chyme) state. This state is usually achieved with 15–40 chewing motions.

There are numerous acupuncture points in the mouth, with two located under each tooth. During chewing, the energy released from the food harmonizes with the body's overall energy flow through these acupuncture points. Therefore, food should be consumed in small bites, and drinks in small sips.

Milk, broth, fruit-vegetable juice, or water should also be drunk in small sips, creating warmth in the mouth and swallowed only after mixing well with saliva. If products are not chewed sufficiently, the digestion process is disrupted from the very beginning. A person who eats quickly usually eats a lot, because the body cannot fully receive the energy in the food through the acupuncture points in the mouth. He only receives the energy produced as a result of chemical breakdown processes.

Food that is not well chewed falls into the stomach in large pieces or fragments. The stomach cannot fully digest such fragments; rather, they begin to rot. Especially, plain white bread (particularly for those with blood group "O") and meat pieces (for those with blood group "A") cause great harm.

Pieces that begin to rot in the stomach pass into the intestines, where rotting continues. These rotten masses in the intestines increase the number of leukocytes in the blood. As a result, the immune system is forced to activate a defense program against this. In this way, each time improperly chewed food is consumed, it strikes the immune system and gradually weakens the body.

Only in fresh fruits and greens, in their seeds and peels, is there no such risk. On the contrary, they increase beneficial microbes in the intestines and serve the benefit of the body. Therefore, it is advisable to consume fruits and greens with their peels and some seeds.

Another useful way to activate the intestinal microflora is to consume or swallow 1–3 cloves of garlic per day.

Overeating

“Behind every illness lies satiety (over-fullness).” — (Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him)

“Eating will be for them a punishment, a trap, and a shackle.” — (Prophet David, peace be upon him)

“He who plants the tree of gluttony will harvest the fruit of disease.” — (Proverb)

Now let us pay attention to how the “tree of gluttony” produces the fruit of disease. When too much food is eaten, the stomach needs a large amount of enzymes for digestion. During enzyme production, the body struggles and requires a lot of energy and essential nutrients.

A healthy person’s stomach completes the initial digestion of 200–250 grams of food—depending on the type of food and digestive strength—within 3 or 4 hours. During the digestion of this amount of food, the heart does not strain. But if twice as much food is eaten, the heart is forced to work 4–6 times harder to digest it, store the excess as reserves, and excrete metabolic waste.

This situation places an excessive load not only on the heart but on all organs responsible for digestion, storage, and elimination of excess substances.

For example, when a car travels on a rocky, uneven road, it consumes several times more fuel than on a smooth road. The distance is the same, but the consumption differs severalfold. Likewise, the human heart tires from constant strain. Constant exertion renders the heart unfit, because our allotted lifespan is measured by heartbeats.

If a young person eats a lot, the body, being strong, can digest it and is able to eliminate excess substances. However, if overeating becomes a habit, the body’s strength gradually runs out, and the process of removing excess substances slows down. When the body’s storage depots fill up, these substances mix into the blood. The blood thickens, circulation slows, and they adhere to the walls of the vessels, gradually narrowing them over time.

In a body with narrowed vessels, blood flow cannot adequately nourish the organs. Organs that do not receive sufficient nourishment send a signal to the brain: “We are hungry!” The brain then demands more nutrients from the body—so the person begins to eat again. As a result, overeating intensifies further.

As the blood thickens, the vessels narrow more, and the organs become even more “hungry.” This leads to a decline in thinking, memory, comprehension, and learning ability, and to the emergence of various diseases in the body.

Thought falls asleep, wisdom dies, organs slow down, and human virtues gradually disappear. Thus, the wisdom “Eating will be a punishment for them” comes true.

Some people suffer the penalty of overeating in the form of obesity and obesity-related diseases. Others remain thin no matter how much they eat. They consider themselves healthy, but in fact this condition is even more dangerous than obesity.

The reason: in obese people, excess toxins accumulate in fat, partially protecting the organs from deterioration. But in thin people, toxins circulate directly through the blood. They try to be expelled through fever, cough, sweating, runny nose, vomiting, and diarrhea.

As a result, the body's organs tire; toxins accumulate in muscles, joints, and tissues, causing pain, suppuration, cysts, and genetic changes (mutations). Such people become frequently ill, nervous, and troubled individuals. That is, the misfortune of those who overeat and become fat and those who overeat and do not become fat is essentially the same.

In verse 31 of Surah Al-A'raf it is said:

“Eat and drink, but do not be excessive; indeed, Allah does not love the excessive.”

This verse is a warning to people who have forgotten the feelings of fear of Allah and modesty. Our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“The most beloved of you to Allah are those who eat little and whose bodies are lean.”

“...A greedy (gluttonous) person and one with a big belly will not enter Paradise.”

These hadiths are extremely important for the health of modern people. For the body's systems can only digest natural nutrients. There is no problem in assimilating natural products.

However, the digestive and immune systems cannot withstand the excessive amounts of genetically modified foods and foods produced with nanotechnologies.

It is impossible to completely avoid such products. Therefore, at least we must learn to eat less.

On Mixed Eating

The Prophet (peace be upon him) never mixed and ate milk with fish, sour foods, or eggs with meat. Because such foods are incompatible—they require different enzymes for digestion. If incompatible foods are mixed, they are not digested and begin to rot in the intestines.

All of these are mutually contradictory nutrients because the enzymes that break them down oppose each other. As a result of this contradiction, enzyme production stops or they neutralize each other. Consequently, the food is not digested, and the process of rotting begins.

This process continues in the stomach for hours and later passes into the intestines. Therefore, after eating, the number of leukocytes in the blood increases, and conditions such as abdominal bloating, distension, and heartburn occur.

Toxic and acidic residues formed as a result of rotting or fermentation directly affect the intestinal cells and slow their function. In sluggish intestines, residues accumulate and form “pouches.” Stones may form in these places and accumulate over the years.

If a person continues to eat improperly, the intestines become heavier and their function slows, resulting in constipation. The intestinal walls become coated with fatty, toxic residues like sewage pipes. Consequently, the body is poisoned; a person becomes fatigued and weak; gas accumulates in the intestines; drowsiness increases; and laziness grows.

Rotten or fermented food residues poison the intestines and enter the blood. Through the blood, these toxic substances spread to the whole body, to organs and cells, and poison them as well. As a result, diseases arise; blood vessels become blocked; and these substances accumulate in organs and joints.

Thick blood flowing through clogged vessels cannot provide sufficient nutrition to the organs, and the brain sends the signal: “We are hungry!”

On Frequent Eating

When the ancient physicians were asked, “What is disease?” they replied:

“Eating food before the previously eaten food has been digested.”

One of the main causes of diseases is eating another food before waiting for the digestion process to finish.

The digestive system operates according to certain rules. Accordingly, approximately 200–250 grams of food is digested in the stomach within 3–4 hours, then passes into the small intestines, where digestion continues. This stage is called the first digestion.

Depending on the type, amount, and heaviness of the food, this process can last 6–10 hours. If another bite is taken before digestion in the stomach is complete, this new food disrupts the previous digestion. Because the new bite mixes with the previously undigested food, fermentation and rotting begin.

As a result, heartburn, gas accumulation in the stomach, and abdominal bloating are observed. In fact, a person should eat new food only after the third digestion is complete—that is, after the nutrients have passed from the blood into the cells. In other words, eating twice a day is sufficient for a person. The same criterion applies to drinking (consuming liquids).

Today, people—especially women and children—spend most of the day chewing something: on the road, on the street while talking, in the cinema, or even in class they sit chewing something.

Our Prophet (peace be upon him), however, often remained hungry and without water. At times, there were even periods when he was hungry for three consecutive nights.

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

“Eating more than twice—at night or during the day—is an ailment.”

“Eating while the stomach is already full is both a disease and unlawful.”

Therefore, according to the most important rule of health, the best cure for all diseases is to eat only after true hunger.

Conclusion

Islamic teachings comprehensively protect human health. Eating less, chewing well, and following proper eating routines is not merely a medical recommendation but one of Allah's commands.

Today, overeating, the consumption of genetically modified products, and an unnatural lifestyle are leading humanity to physical and spiritual weakness. Therefore, a healthy life, proper eating, and eating less are a form of worship. Indeed, "A person whose body is not healthy cannot fully worship Allah."

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