

Moderation In Food Consumption

Abu Abdillaah Muhammad Al-Jibaaly
Sickness Regulations & Exhortations (2nd Ed) p5-8



A believer is instructed to be moderate in eating. Allaah (subhaanahu wa ta'aala) says:

“Eat and drink, but do not be excessive – indeed, He (Allaah) does not love the excessive.” [Al-A'raaf (7):31]

Overeating is one of the most frequent causes of illness. The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) considered it a major source of evil – physical, mental, and spiritual. Al-Muqdaam Bin Ma'd Yakrib (radiyallaahu anhu) reported that the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said:

“Never would a human being fill a vessel worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for a son of Aadam to eat a few small morsels to support his back. However, if he insists (on eating more), let it be a third (of his stomach) for food, a third for drink, and a third for breathing.”¹

Thus, controlling one's food intake is an important defence against illness. Ibn al-Qayyim (rahimahullaah) said:

“Allaah (subhaanahu wa ta'aala) instructs His servants (in the above ayah) to introduce into their body food and drink that are needed for its maintenance – in replacement for what had disintegrated (dead cells, excretions, etc). He further tells them that their intake should be such as to benefit the body – both in quantity and quality. When it exceeds that, it becomes excessive. And both excessiveness and under-eating obstruct health and bring sickness. Thus, preserving the health is all comprised in these two divine words...

Whoever scrutinises the Prophet's (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) guidance will find it the best guidance for preserving the health. This is so because preserving it requires a good control of food and drink, clothing and dwelling, air, sleep and wakefulness, motion and rest, marriage, and discharging and saving. If these things are conducted in an equitable manner that is appropriate to the body, location, age, and habits, then they will be effective in preserving the health...”²

Furthermore, if one falls ill, limiting one's food intake becomes an important form of treatment. An old Arabian doctor called Al-Haarith Bin Kaladah³ once said:

“The stomach is the home of disease, and regimen (or diet) is the head of medications.”

¹ Recorded by Ahmad, at-Tirmidhee, and others. Verified to be authentic by al-Albaanee (Saheehul-Jaami' no 5674 and as-Saheehah no.2265)

² Zaad ul-Ma'aad vol.4 pp.166-167

³ Al-Haarith Bin Kaladah ath-Thaqafee was a contemporary of the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) but did not meet him. He lived in at-Taa'if and then moved to Persia to study medicine. He died in 50H (672CE) (Tabaqaatul-Atibbaa' p162)

According to Stewart Mitchell:

“Restricting our food intake totally or partially, as a fast when we feel unwell, may have benefits we are only just beginning to measure. It would seem logical that if we have no appetite, with a swollen throat or bowel upset, we will feel disinclined to eat much. Yet, we are brought up to believe that eating gives immediate strength and without food we would not have the energy to recover from illness. In fact, research by conventional doctors from the University of Australia would seem to confirm that the opposite is true. The strength which is gained from fasting is not muscular but hormonal, and having conducted experiments on volunteers, Professor Ray Kearney and Gavin Greenlock concluded that our body’s natural anti-inflammatory response, via the hormones known as corticosteroids, is increased when food is restricted.

The conclusions drawn from this research suggest that concentrated foods are best consumed within any one six-hour period of the day, with only raw foods eaten in the remaining period. The authors recommend this for typical inflammation of acute illness, as well as for degenerative conditions such as cancer.

Extensive clinical studies of fasting in Sweden show that human beings do not require food in the way that, for example, a motor vehicle requires fuel. The famous Stockholm marches, led by Dr Lennart Edren, illustrated this. Nineteen men walked from Gothenberg to Stockholm, a distance of over 352 miles, in ten days, while on a total fast. Moreover, their protein and blood sugar levels were shown to be normal throughout the fasting period.”⁴



⁴ A Practical Guide To Naturopathy, pp.29-30