

# Achieving Wellness through a whole foods based diet

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*“In the business of keeping you healthy”*



# Goals of this course

- ▶ How to eat: Class 1 (Feb 25)
  - ▶ **HOW** you eat is just as important as **WHAT** you eat
    - ▶ Explore the process of digestion and how to achieve optimum digestion
    - ▶ Mindful eating
- ▶ What are “Whole Foods”: Class 2 (March 4)
  - ▶ Benefits of whole foods: why choose them
  - ▶ Understand how to choose whole foods
  - ▶ Discuss different whole foods
- ▶ Putting it all together: Class 3 (March 11)
  - ▶ Practical tips
  - ▶ Food journal analysis
  - ▶ Q&A

# WHAT IS GOOD NUTRITION?

## ► GOOD NUTRITION IS:

NAG (natural, alive and good quality food)



GOOD DIGESTION (steps to good digestion + mindful eating)



GOOD ABSORPTION (intact intestinal lining)



PROPER ELIMINATION (steps to proper elimination)

# Digestion

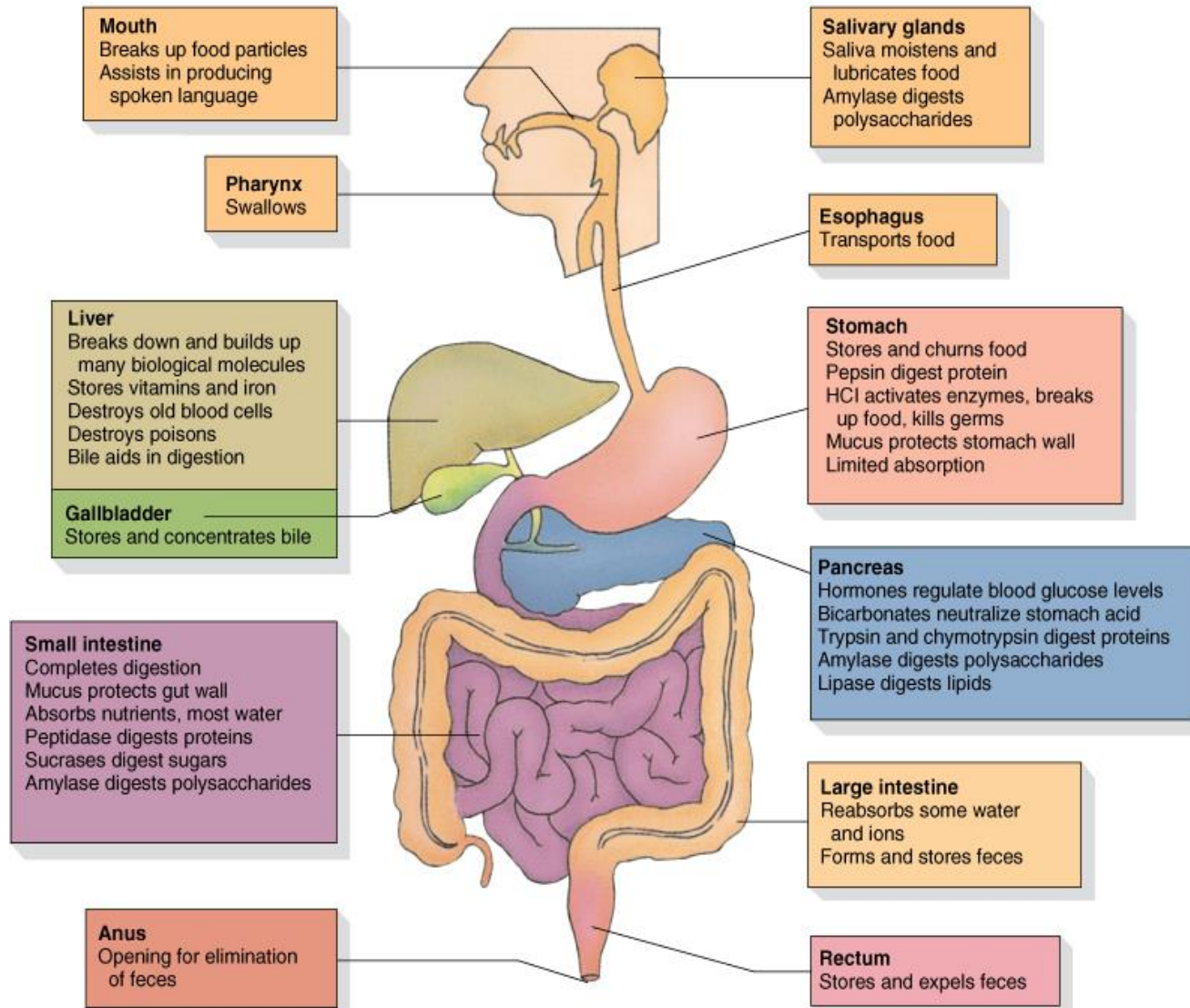
- ▶ Imam Al-Kadhim (as) said:
  - ▶ Diet control is the fountainhead of remedies and the stomach is the house of all ailments, so condition your body while it can be conditioned
- ▶ What does science say:
- ▶ Hippocrates (founder of western medicine): “All disease begins in the gut.”
  - ▶ Celiac disease: related to inflammation of the gut
    - ▶ Leads to depression, anemia, osteoporosis (due to lack of ABSORPTION of nutrients)
  - ▶ Inflammatory Bowel diseases: Crohn’s and Ulcerative colitis
    - ▶ Due to inflammation of the intestinal lining
  - ▶ Allergies
    - ▶ Linked to “leaky gut syndrome” (intestinal permeability)
  - ▶ Gut microbes
    - ▶ Linked to obesity, immune health, diabetes, inflammation, brain health
    - ▶ Affected by our digestion processes and our diet
  - ▶ Gut-brain connection is 2 way system
    - ▶ gut known as “second brain”; 90% of it carries information to the brain from the gut
    - ▶ 95% of serotonin (feel good hormone) found in the gut
    - ▶ 70% of our immune system located in the gut—research underway to see how gut affects immune system

Link between Gut health &  
overall health is becoming  
stronger each day

Prophet 1400 years ago had said:

**STOMACH IS THE HOUSE OF EVERY AILMENT**

# Digestive system: a miraculous entity



# UNDERSTANDING THE DIGESTION PROCESS

## ► MOUTH

1. Chewing
  1. Saliva production—enzyme—digestion starts
  2. Breakdown of food—easier digestion further downstream
  3. Kick starts HCl production in stomach
2. Presence of mind (mindfulness)
  1. Parasympathetic nervous system activated
  2. Smelling food: saliva production, increased enzyme production

# UNDERSTANDING THE DIGESTION PROCESS

## ▶ STOMACH

- ▶ Acid (HCL) secreted for digestion: Very important element of digestion

## ▶ SMALL INTESTINES

- ▶ Continued digestion and ABSORPTION begins here:
- ▶ Lining of intestines need to be intact
  - ▶ Factors that affect it:
    - ▶ Food sensitivities
    - ▶ Stress
    - ▶ Dysbiosis caused by faulty digestion, other treatments etc
    - ▶ Decreased acid production—leading to overgrowth of bad bacteria

# Functions of stomach acid

## Functions:

1. Natural antibiotic—kills bugs
2. Mineral absorption
  - Minerals important for body (more on this in next hadith)
3. Protein breakdown and amino acid absorption
  - Amino acid-smallest unit that is absorbed
  - If incomplete protein digestion→increased risk of food sensitivities & allergies
4. Mucus production:
  - A protective layer to protect stomach from it's own acid
  - More acid→More mucus to protect the stomach
5. Stomach acid = spark that starts peristalsis

Peristalsis= the muscular motion of our digestive system that propels the food forward.

# Functions of stomach acid

6. Stimulates release of digestive enzymes from the pancreas (they digest proteins, fats, and carbohydrates further)
  - ▶ More acid→→→→More digestive enzymes→→→→better digestion
7. Stimulates bile release from gall bladder
  - ▶ More acid→→→More bile→→→better fat digestion

# Understanding the digestion process

## ▶ LARGE INTESTINES

- ▶ Final absorption of water and preparation for elimination
- ▶ Microbes (bacteria): break down remaining food, produce vitamins.

## ▶ ACCESSORY ORGANS

- ▶ LIVER—everything goes through liver first before it enters the body: toxins, nutrients
- ▶ PANCREAS—secrete digestive enzymes and insulin
- ▶ GALL BLADDER—secretes bile to help in digestion of fat

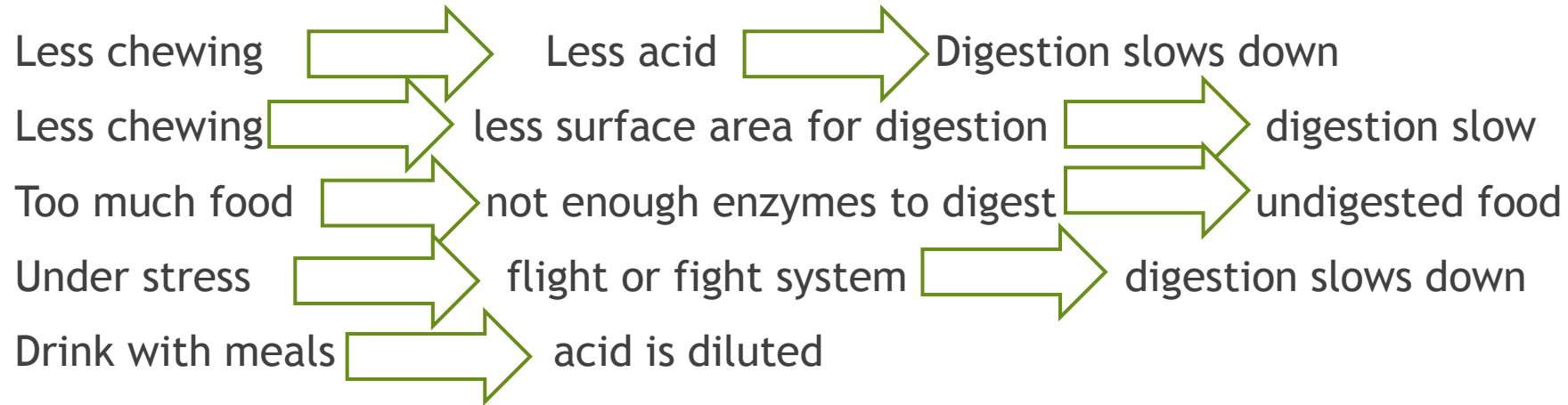
# Do we value our GUT?



# Steps to good digestion:

1. Chew food and eat slowly
2. Don't eat when stressed
  1. Take 3 breaths before you eat
  2. Recite prayer before you start
  3. Mindful eating
3. Don't eat when overly hungry
  1. Eat small meals more often
4. Don't drink liquids with meals
5. Avoid caffeine with meals
6. Eat until 80% full

# Why practice good steps to digestion



Digestion is slow and bogged down in stomach as it struggles to digest the food

Peristalsis is slow -> food moves slowly -> constipation -> undigested food sits around the intestines -> gut bacteria digest the food -> metabolic toxins produced by bacteria -> increased toxic load -> liver needs to remove toxins -> **LIVER OVERLOAD** -> toxins irritate the intestines or if absorbed into blood stream -> irritate other cells -> **INFLAMMATION**

# What do our ahadith say?

- ▶ Prophet (s): From among the etiquette of eating is to take small morsels and chew them completely (biharul anwar, vol 66: pg415)
- ▶ Imam Ridha (a): Whoever does not want his stomach to trouble him, he should not drink water with his food, until he has finished his meal. Whoever does this the moisture in his body will increase, his stomach will become weak and his veins will not be able to gain energy from the food, because if water is continually poured upon food, that food will not be digested in the stomach (biharul anwar, vol 62, pg 323)
- ▶ Imam Sadiq (a): When eating, allocate up to a third of stomach for food, up to a third for water and leave 1/3 empty (hadith unwan al-basri)
- ▶ Imam Ali (a) said: “Over indulgence of food causes various kinds of diseases” (Qur'ar-ul-Hikam, p 359)

# Looks familiar?



# Distracted eating: why we do it?

- ▶ Too many distractions in our lives
- ▶ we are busy BUT WE HAVE TO EAT TO SURVIVE!!!
- ▶ Eating suffers: no time but we need to eat so we multitask and eat on the go because eating so automatic...we don't really have to think
  - ▶ Swallow, digest and eliminate will happen regardless
  - ▶ Kids fussy eaters -eat better (or more) if distracted by TV
  - ▶ Relationship between hunger and food not clear cut anymore....tangled with emotions, stress, socialization etc

# Understanding Mindful Eating

What is it?

What does Islam say?

What does science say?

Why practice it? What's in it for me?



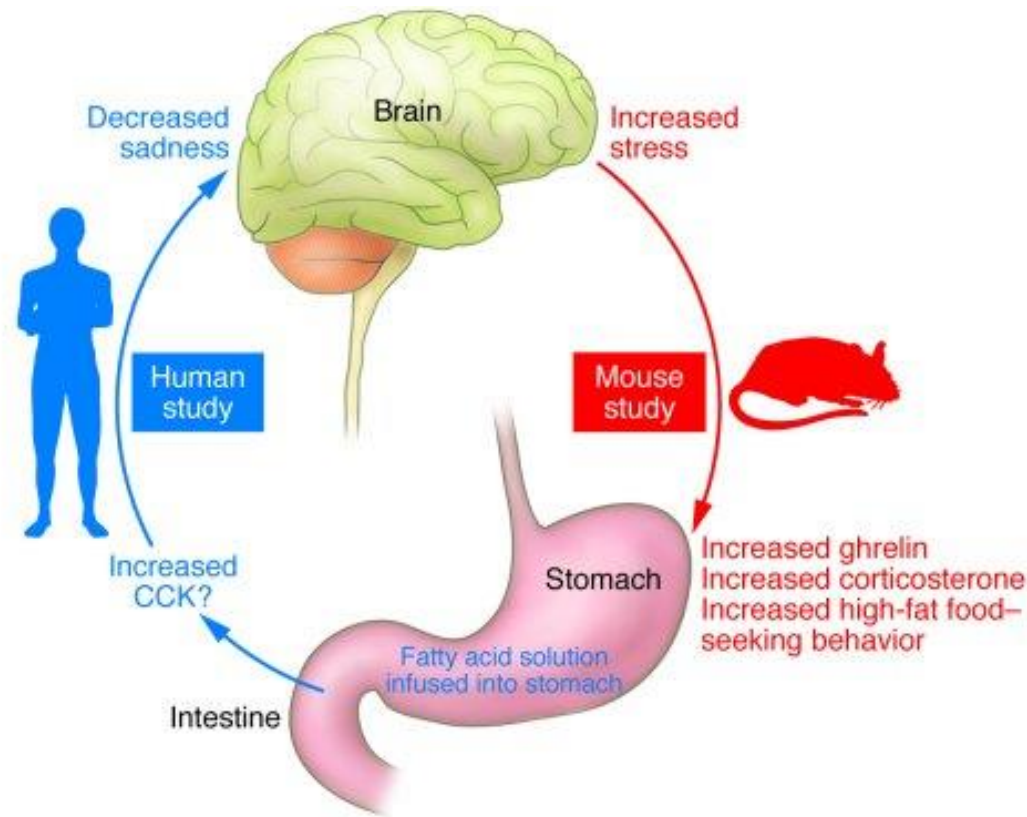
# What is mindful eating?

- ▶ Mindfulness is deliberately paying full attention to what is happening around you and within you----in your body, heart and mind. Mindfulness is **awareness without criticism and judgement**
- ▶ Being mindful, when we eat allows us to witness how the food tastes, how we feel when we eat and makes our thoughts positive as we ingest foods

# Why should our thoughts affect our eating? What's the connection?

- ▶ GUT-BRAIN connection:
- ▶ Our state of mind (emotions) affect how well our digestive system works and what we eat affects how we think
- ▶ Lots of research in this area: the “gut” also known as the second brain. 95% of serotonin (a brain chemical) is made in the gut!!
  - ▶ Signals from brain to gut and gut to brain
    - ▶ A bidirectional signalling system
    - ▶ Digestive consequences of emotional state
      - ▶ Butterflies in the stomach
      - ▶ No appetite when stressed
      - ▶ Digestive malfunction when stressed
      - ▶ Many digestive disorders like irritable bowel syndrome linked to stress

# Mental state: effects satiety and types of food desired



# How does mindfulness affect our digestion

Mindfulness works by affecting the autonomic (involuntary) nervous system. This system regulates many organs including digestion. It has two major parts:

- ▶ The **sympathetic nervous system** helps mobilize the body for action. When a person is under stress, it produces the "fight-or-flight response": the heart rate and breathing rate go up and blood vessels narrow (restricting the flow of blood and digestion slow down).
- ▶ The **parasympathetic nervous system** causes the heart rate and breathing rate to slow down, the blood vessels to dilate (improving blood flow), and the flow of digestive juices increases.
- ▶ Improved digestion: parasympathetic system is stimulated when we are mindful:
  - ▶ Affects enzyme secretion, acid secretion, gut motility and ultimately absorption of nutrients
- ▶ Practice of mindfulness even intermittently can lead to Increased sense of wellbeing, decreased risk of disease

# What does islam say?

1. Remember Allah when eating and refrain from useless talking, as food is a blessing and sustenance from God and you should remember Him and be thankful as you eat.

Imam Ali (a), Furu' Kafi, Vol. 7, pg 296

What this hadith is saying:

**MINDFUL EATING!!!**

Focus on the food, be aware of where the food is coming from and what is it going to do for your body, how it feels, tastes and be in a state of gratitude for this blessing

**MIND ON FOOD AND IT'S CREATOR!!!**

# What does science say?

- ▶ Small study conducted over 6 weeks. Training in mindful eating with emphasis on body sensations, awareness and triggers to overeat.
- ▶ Results: Compared to baseline data, participants showed statistically significant increases in measures of mindfulness and cognitive restraint around **eating**, and statistically significant decreases in **weight**, **eating** disinhibition, binge **eating**, depression, perceived stress, physical symptoms, negative affect, and C-reactive protein.
- ▶ Conclusion:  
The study provides preliminary evidence that a **eating** focused mindfulness-based intervention can result in significant changes in **weight**, **eating** behavior, and psychological distress in obese individuals.
- ▶ complementary Therapies in Medicine. 18(6):260-4, 2010 Dec.

# What does science say?

- ▶ This is what the National Institute of Health ( a renowned US health agency ) says in its review of research on mindfulness
  - ▶ cultivating a more mindful way of being is associated with less emotional distress, more positive states of mind, and better quality of life. In addition, mindfulness practice can influence the brain, the autonomic nervous system, stress hormones, the immune system, and health behaviors, including eating, sleeping

# What are the benefits of mindful eating

## 1. ALLOWS US TO TUNE INTO OUR BODY AND EAT TILL 80% FULL

Mindfulness—if you are aware when you eat then you know what it feels like to be **hungry, satisfied and stuffed**

**Why is 80% eating so important:**

### **LONGEVITY AND GOOD HEALTH**

Animal studies

Caloric restriction (CR) markedly extends life span and improves the health of a broad number of species.

Human population studies

The Okinawans -- a japanese tribe known for the most healthy centenerranians and they eat till they are 80% full

### **LESS FOOD ->LESS CALORIES->WT. MANAGEMENT**

### **PHYSICAL BENEFITS FOR DIGESTIVE SYSTEM**

More food->needs more enzymes->overworked pancreas

More food->digestion slow->stomach overloaded with food->system slows down->toxin buildup happens->illnesses

More food->energy goes into digestion->not available for other functions->tired, mental sluggishness, lethargy, food cravings

- What does 80% full feel like?
  - Imam Ali: “get up while you still have appetite”
  - Satisfied but can still eat more then you are 80% full
  - Takes 20 minutes for satiety signals to reach brain so you should never feel satisfied when you finish eating: there should be a desire to eat which will go away after 20 minutes

# What are the benefits of mindful eating

## 1. IMPROVES DIGESTION

1. When our mind is tuned out during mealtime, the digestive process may be up to 30% to 40% less effective.
2. Being mindful stimulates the parasympathetic system in brain which is responsible for the process of digestion.

## 3. Allows us to try new healthier options

1. Being mindful = being non-judgemental about the situation
2. Exploring, analyzing, feeling, tasting
3. mindfulness make it easier for us to try new healthier options that weren't so appealing before

# How to eat mindfully

- ▶ Consider eating as an important, focussed activity
- ▶ DO NOT eat in front of TV, computer, newspaper, book, ipad, ipod.....
- ▶ Start with a prayer and 3 breaths
- ▶ Bring your attention to what your senses are sensing
  - ▶ Can't tell your brain to stop thinking 1000 thoughts but you can focus on a physical sense.....senses ground you in the present. Thoughts take you into future or past
  - ▶ Touch, see, hear, taste, smell
- ▶ Its ok if you loose your attention: bring it back



# Questions?

