

FIT FOR LIFE SUNDAY 29 MARCH 2015

Kids gain from Whole Grain

Start your child's day with a delicious bowl of Nestlé® Breakfast Cereals, made with **WHOLE GRAIN!**

Enjoy the goodness of **WHOLE GRAIN** everyday



food & health 11

To prevent diabetes, what you need is BMV!

Food in diabetes

By Dr ZAITUN YASSIN & Dr MAHENDERAN APPUKUTTY

DIABETES is one of many diseases in which the onset is largely affected by the food that we choose to eat throughout our lives.

Diabetes has become a Malaysian epidemic that poses a real and significant threat to an individual. Even more alarming, it's now beginning to show up among teenagers and children as well.

Diabetes causes numerous health complications such as cardiovascular disease, blindness, kidney failure and nerve disease.

Bear in mind, diabetes develops progressively, like weeds on your lawn – maintained well and your lawn looks great, neglected for too long, and you may find yourself in quite a painful situation.

The onset of diabetes is usually preceded by an unhealthy lifestyle which includes sedentary living and poor dietary choices.

Despite concerns over the increasing number of diabetics and the numerous adverse effects of this non-communicable disease (NCD), we still tend to think that we are “immune” to diabetes.

The fact is, we're not. You may already be diabetic but may not be aware of it.

Diabetes is a progressive disease, often taking years to develop before it transpires into a full-blown disease.

However, diabetes can be prevented, and one of the best ways of doing so is by practising a healthy eating habit and regular physical activity.

Achieve balance through variety

No single food can give you the variety of nutrients that your body needs to stay healthy. Therefore, go for the BMV (be Balanced, practise Moderation, choose Variety) approach. It's always good to go for different

types of foods for every meal in appropriate portions, which you can refer to from the Malaysian Food Pyramid.

Essentially, a balanced and healthy diet should lead you to consume a combination of complex carbohydrate-rich foods (e.g. cereals and grains, preferably whole grains), fruits and vegetables, protein-rich foods (e.g. fish, poultry, lean meats and legumes), milk and dairy products, and don't forget to drink water.

Within each of the above mentioned food groups, aim to eat a wide variety of each so that you can obtain the required nutrients and other food components.

In addition, consume serving sizes that are appropriate for your age and physical activity level.

Cook it right

While BMV is important to achieve variety, food preparation and cooking methods are equally important.

You can choose healthier cooking methods such as steaming, grilling, baking, roasting or searing your dishes, and occasionally stir frying them.

Be mindful of oil, salt, sugar and coconut milk that you add during food preparation. You can cut down or modify those dishes high in salt, sugar and fat by replacing them with a healthier choice.

Different herbs and spices can have the same flavour-adding effect, so try experimenting with them whenever you can. The principle is to choose natural ingredients, go fresh, and retain as much nutrients as you can as you go along.

Remember that home-cooked meals are always better since you can choose what you put into your dishes and how you cook them.

Eating out

Because of our busy lifestyles, many of us tend to eat out rather

than prepare our own home-cooked meals.

However, eating healthy doesn't mean you need to give up your favourite dishes or refrain yourself from dining out at your beloved hawker stall.

Make wise food choices when eating out and go for dishes that are prepared through steaming or grilling instead (e.g. noodle soup, grilled fish etc.).

In addition, go for more vegetables, fruits, cereals, whole grains and fish that provide fewer calories but have more nutrients.

Take it down a notch

Excessive sugar intake can lead to overweight and/or obesity that could increase the risk of diabetes. It may also lead to risk factors that could accelerate development of other NCDs. You can reduce sugar intake by:

- Gradually removing it from your dishes when you prepare your meals.

- Consume less sugar-filled confectionaries and food items.

- Choose smaller portions of desserts (e.g kuih and cakes) or replace them with healthier options such as fruits.

- Choose plain water rather than carbonated and sugary drinks.

- Limit intake of table sugar or sweetened condensed milk to one teaspoon per cup of drink.

- Avoid consuming sugary foods or beverages in between meals and close to bedtime.

Dietary fat, on the other hand, is a source of essential fatty acids and is necessary for the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. Nevertheless, excessive intake can still lead to overweight and obesity, a major diabetes risk factor.

Therefore, aim to:

- Reduce amount of oil when cooking.

- Reduce intake of fried food.

- Reduce consumption of visible fats such as margarine, butter, salad oils, cream, mayonnaise and coconut milk.

- Reduce intake of food containing hidden fats such as traditional kuih, cake, and pastry.
- Remove skin of poultry when cooking and go for lean cut meats.

Dine on time

Make it a habit to eat all main meals on time and avoid skipping them. It will help you achieve bowel regularity whilst preventing you from overeating.

If you feel hungry in between meals, have a nutritious snack such as fruits or an oat biscuit. High sugar snacks tend to spoil your appetite and it adds unnecessary calories to your diet.

Stay active

It is estimated that about a third of diabetes cases are due to physical inactivity (WHO, 2014). In fact, just a mere 5% reduction in body weight followed by regular to moderate intensity exercise could reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by more than 50% (Colberg et al, 2010).

Therefore, start being active now and aim to have at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (such as brisk walking, slow jogging, swimming) at least five times a week.

Start young

Prevention of diabetes should start from young. Statistics have shown a three-fold increase in prevalence of diabetes in people between the ages of 18 and 35 years old over the last 15 years.

Children should be encouraged to live healthier lives by increasing their physical activities and practising a healthy eating habit. The healthy lifestyle messages delivered in this article can be a useful guide for children as well.

Parents play an active role in shaping healthy lifestyles in their children. You should:

- Be role models for your children. If you live healthily, your children will follow you.

- Guide your children to make nutritious dietary choices.

- Provide ample opportunity for physical activity and encourage outdoor family activities (i.e. play at the park, recreational sports or brisk walks).

- Limit children's screen time to not more than two hours.

- Involve children in meal planning, shopping and also cooking meals.

- Involve children in household chores.

Cost of diabetes

Diabetes is essentially an “expensive disease”; it is debilitating not only to health, but also the economy.

Around 2.6 million Malaysians age 18 years and above today suffer from diabetes (NHMS, 2011), with the total national burden amounting to over RM1.3bil in 2012 alone (Zafar, 2013).

Annually, every diabetic patient spends roughly RM140 and RM440 for primary and tertiary level outpatient care, respectively. The Ministry of Health Malaysia subsidizes RM400 per patient per year to provide outpatient care at primary health clinics and RM2,700 at tertiary diabetes clinics.

Just imagine what that would cost for diabetics at private healthcare institutions (Wan Norlida, 2013).

Making a few lifestyle changes, especially to your diet, can dramatically lower your chances of developing diabetes.

Change may be challenging and takes a little bit of effort. However, once you realise that diabetes is a debilitating disease, you will not hesitate to make healthy eating and active living your way of life.

This article is courtesy of Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM) 2015. NMM is an annual initiative jointly-organised by the Nutrition Society of Malaysia, Malaysian Dietitians' Association and Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity. To learn more about preventing diabetes and other interesting nutrition information, go to the Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM) Facebook page or visit www.nutritionmonthmalaysia.org.my.

Printed and distributed by PressReader PressReader.com +1 604 278 4604 COPYRIGHT AND PROTECTED BY APPLICABLE LAW