**Guide to a Nutritious Life**

**Practicing mindful eating daily is a way to achieve a healthy life and is good for your digestive system and mental health.**

[Eman Fatima Siddiqui](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/eman-fatima-siddiqui)

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How will you take care of your health? Does a balanced meal fulfill the requirement for nutrition and good health, or is it just a necessity for life? Yes, it is a requirement for health, and it is not only important to include a healthy diet in your routine, but consuming sufficient nutrients adds a plus point to your life.

When I was an undergraduate student, I was distressed to survey and research public health in Pakistan. The situation is dire, especially in rural areas and other lower-income countries, where malnutrition, stunting, wasting, and diet-related diseases are prevalent due to an agrarian economy, food insecurity, and poverty. Wasting is an epidemic in Pakistan, leading to severe acute malnutrition, especially in infants and children. Nutrition is essential for all ages and stages of life, from reading your morning newspaper to driving your car. Nutrition starts with your teeth and continues to your ankles. What disturbs me most is that while the world advances technologically, we remain clueless when it comes to health.

Let’s talk about child nutrition. Diet-related diseases like type 2 diabetes and obesity are common in children due to low activity levels and poor food choices. The more ultra-processed food or confectioneries you give your child, the more they are driven towards illness. Some parents allow their children to overeat, which is the root cause of inviting disease into the body. Reducing screen time while eating, spending more time understanding the food you consume, and engaging in any form of exercise are key factors in changing a lifestyle. Foods prepared at home or packaged foods bought from the market can significantly impact your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. I would be lying if I said I ate a burger when I was stressed and didn’t experience bowel disturbances the next day. Some emotionally unstable people have misguided routines when it comes to eating, leading to serious disturbances in their lives.

Then comes spiritual health, not commonly talked about but deeply connected to food. “Spirituality refers to a human being’s subjective relationship (cognitive, emotional, and intuitive) to what is unknowable about existence and how a person integrates that relationship into a perspective about the universe, the world, self, moral values, others, and one’s sense of meaning” (Senreich, 2013). The impact may seem like just a sensation on your skin, but it all comes down to your food choices. Every time we eat, we don’t think about the food on our plate, just that it needs to be consumed. Choosing your food, cooking it, and then enjoying every bite by chewing for 5-7 seconds helps you acknowledge the food on the table and has numerous biological benefits. In nutrition, we call it “Mindful Eating.” Practicing mindful eating daily is a way to achieve a healthy life and is good for your digestive system and mental health.

Nutrition is defined as the food at work in the body, from the time it is eaten to the various functions it performs. Nutrients are the components found in food needed by the body. Some nutrients come from food, and some are produced in our body, known as macro and micronutrients. Poor nutritional status indicates weak health, poor diet, and lifestyle, often requiring immediate medical attention. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines malnutrition as “deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake or imbalances of essential nutrients,” which is categorized into double and triple burden categories. Surveys suggest that 45% of deaths annually in middle- and low-income countries result from severe acute malnutrition. We are surrounded by people with diet-related diseases every day, often without realizing it. Time passes, memories fade, and people come and go, but diseases persist. The lifespan of a disease is directly influenced by your lifestyle.

For instance, if I were living a sedentary lifestyle yet consuming a healthy diet, I would still have a 75% chance of developing a disease. In Pakistan, 88% of people have a chance of having diet-related illnesses due to a sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy environment. It starts with you, making changes that lead to a lifetime of your best self through diet and lifestyle adaptations. It is never too difficult if it looks easy. You have a special connection with your body. Find it, know it, acknowledge it, and you will become nutritious inside and out.

**Eman Fatima Siddiqui**  
The writer is a Dietician and a Food Safety Officer.