

Balanced Eating in the Quran: A Scientific Review of Moderation, Portion Control, and the Prevention of Lifestyle Diseases

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1. Abstract

Balanced eating occupies an important place in Islamic teachings, where food consumption is guided by moderation, balance, and ethical responsibility. At the same time, the modern world is facing a growing burden of lifestyle-related diseases, including obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and various metabolic disorders, largely driven by overeating, poor portion control, and unhealthy eating patterns. This review examines the concept of balanced eating from an Islamic perspective and explores its relevance in the context of contemporary nutritional science. The Qur'an encourages mindful consumption and clearly warns against excess, stating, "Eat and drink, but do not be excessive" (Qur'an 7:31), reflecting an approach that protects both physical health and moral discipline. Islamic teachings, supported by Prophetic guidance, also emphasize portion control and avoidance of overeating, principles that are now strongly supported by scientific evidence for metabolic health. In addition, traditional Arab eating practices where main meals are commonly consumed during the daytime and lighter meals are taken at night are discussed in relation to modern research on meal timing and circadian metabolism. Emerging evidence suggests that such patterns may help reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, and metabolic syndrome. Overall, this review highlights how Islamic dietary principles offer a balanced, practical, and preventive framework that aligns closely with modern strategies for promoting long-term health.

2. Keywords: Balanced eating, Islamic nutrition, Qur'anic dietary guidance, moderation, portion control, lifestyle diseases, obesity and metabolic disorders, meal timing, circadian nutrition, and traditional Arab dietary patterns.

3. Introduction

Lifestyle-related diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, and metabolic disorders have increased significantly in recent decades and now pose a serious global health challenge. Scientific evidence indicates that unhealthy dietary behaviors, including excessive food intake, large portion sizes, and irregular eating patterns, play a major role in the development of these conditions (Hruby et al., 2015). Consequently, modern nutrition research increasingly emphasizes balanced eating, moderation, and portion control as key strategies for disease prevention.

These dietary principles closely resemble the guidance found in Islamic teachings. The Qur'an promotes a balanced and responsible approach to food consumption and repeatedly warns against excess. A clear example is found in the verse:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (Surah Al-A'raf 7:31)

Translation:

"Eat and drink, but do not be excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess."

This verse allows eating and drinking while setting a clear boundary against overeating. From a scientific perspective, excessive energy intake has been strongly associated with weight

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gain, insulin resistance, and metabolic disturbances (World Health Organization et al., 2023). Thus, Qur'anic guidance reflects principles that are now widely supported by contemporary health research.

Islamic teachings also emphasize portion control and mindful eating. Prophetic traditions encourage individuals to eat according to need rather than desire, promoting moderation instead of restriction. Research shows that controlling portion size is an effective method for reducing overall calorie intake and improving metabolic health outcomes (Rolls et al., 2018). In addition, traditional Arab eating patterns, influenced by Islamic culture, typically involve consuming larger meals during the daytime and lighter meals in the evening. Recent studies in circadian nutrition suggest that eating earlier in the day supports better glucose regulation and insulin sensitivity, whereas heavy nighttime eating increases the risk of obesity and diabetes (Garaulet et al., 2013). This alignment highlights the relevance of Islamic dietary principles in addressing modern lifestyle diseases.

4. Concept of Balanced Eating in the Qur'an

The Qur'anic concept of balanced eating is grounded in the broader ethical framework of moderation, responsibility, and self-regulation. Rather than presenting food consumption as an unrestricted personal choice, Islamic teachings view eating as a purposeful act that should support physical health, mental clarity, and moral discipline. This approach closely resembles modern public health perspectives, which recognize balanced eating as a cornerstone of disease prevention and sustainable health.

Balanced eating, from an Islamic viewpoint, does not promote rigid dietary restriction or asceticism. Instead, it encourages a middle path that allows enjoyment of food while maintaining control over quantity and frequency. Contemporary nutrition science similarly emphasizes that long-term health is best supported by dietary patterns that are realistic, culturally acceptable, and moderate rather than extreme (Hruby et al., 2015). This convergence suggests that Qur'anic dietary ethics are compatible with evidence-based nutritional principles.

A useful way to understand this alignment is through the idea that eating behavior reflects broader lifestyle choices. As noted in nutritional research, "healthful eating patterns are defined not by perfection, but by consistency and balance over time" (Willett et al., 2019). This perspective mirrors the Islamic emphasis on balance as a continuous practice rather than an occasional effort.

4.1 Moderation (*Wasatiyyah*) in Food Intake

Moderation (*wasatiyyah*) represents one of the most fundamental principles in Islamic thought and plays a central role in dietary behavior. Applied to food intake, moderation encourages individuals to consume sufficient nourishment to maintain strength and well-being while avoiding extremes that burden the body. This principle reflects an understanding of human physiology that is increasingly supported by modern science.

Research consistently shows that moderate energy intake is associated with improved metabolic regulation, better appetite control, and reduced risk of obesity and insulin resistance (Hruby et al., 2015). Extreme dietary behaviors whether excessive eating or severe restriction are linked to metabolic instability and poor long-term outcomes. Islamic moderation, therefore, aligns closely with contemporary recommendations that prioritize balance over short-term dietary control.

A widely cited observation in nutrition research states:

"Sustainable health outcomes are achieved through moderation, not through extremes."

This statement captures the essence of *wasatiyyah* as applied to eating habits. By encouraging moderation, Islamic dietary guidance supports eating patterns that are practical, culturally adaptable, and conducive to lifelong health. Such an approach is particularly relevant in addressing lifestyle-related diseases that develop gradually due to long-term behavioral patterns rather than isolated dietary choices.

4.2 Avoidance of Excess (*Israf*) in Eating

In contrast to moderation, excess (*israf*) is strongly discouraged within Islamic dietary ethics. Excessive eating is viewed as harmful not only to physical health but also to personal discipline and social responsibility. From a modern scientific standpoint, this concern is well justified, as excessive calorie intake is a primary contributor to obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic syndrome (World Health Organization et al., 2023).

Excess consumption places continuous stress on metabolic systems, leading to impaired glucose regulation, chronic inflammation, and abnormal fat accumulation. Studies in nutritional epidemiology have demonstrated that habitual overeating, particularly in environments with energy-dense foods, significantly increases the risk of long-term metabolic disorders (Hall et al., 2019).

An influential statement in public health nutrition highlights this issue clearly:

“Overconsumption, rather than nutrient deficiency, is the dominant nutritional challenge of modern societies.”

Islamic teachings address this challenge by promoting restraint and self-awareness in eating, discouraging indulgence beyond bodily needs. By framing excess as an undesirable behavior, Islamic dietary ethics offer a preventive model that complements scientific strategies aimed at controlling portion sizes and reducing chronic disease risk. When viewed together, the avoidance of *israf* and the promotion of moderation form a coherent and health-protective dietary philosophy.

5. Portion Control in Islamic Teachings

Portion control occupies a central place in Islamic dietary guidance, reflecting a deep understanding of human nature, physical limits, and spiritual well-being. Islam does not approach eating merely as a biological necessity but as an act of responsibility that shapes both the body and the soul. By encouraging moderation in quantity, Islamic teachings protect individuals from physical harm while cultivating gratitude, self-discipline, and humility. In a time when excessive portion sizes have become normalized, this guidance feels particularly relevant and profoundly humane.

From an Islamic perspective, eating beyond need is not simply a health issue; it is a spiritual imbalance. Modern nutrition science now confirms what Islamic teachings emphasized centuries ago: large portion sizes promote overeating, disrupt metabolic regulation, and increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, and metabolic disorders (Hall et al., 2019). Thus, portion control in Islam represents a preventive approach that nurtures both physical health and inner balance.

5.1 Qur’anic Guidance on Portion Control

The Qur’an addresses eating not merely as a physical act but as a moral and behavioral responsibility. Although specific measurements are not prescribed, the Qur’an repeatedly establishes boundaries that regulate quantity, intention, and restraint in food consumption. These verses collectively form a strong ethical foundation for portion control, emphasizing balance, awareness, and accountability.

Some Ayah

Surah Taha 20:81 كَلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ

Translation:

“Eat from the good things We have provided for you, but do not transgress therein.”

This verse allows enjoyment of food while warning against crossing limits. The word “*transgress*” implies going beyond need, which includes overeating. Portion control here becomes a sign of gratitude rather than restriction.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:172)

Translation:

“O you who believe! Eat from the good and wholesome things We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him that you worship.”

This verse directly links **food consumption** with **quality, gratitude, and responsibility**. The word “*ṭayyibāt*” refers to food that is wholesome, pure, and beneficial for health. From a nutritional perspective, this aligns with modern recommendations that emphasize nutrient-dense and health-promoting foods rather than excessive or harmful consumption. Gratitude here also implies mindful eating consuming food with awareness, not excess making this verse highly relevant to balanced eating and portion control.

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْنُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ
(Surah Al-Baqarah 2:60)

Translation:

“Eat and drink from the provision of Allah, but do not act corruptly on the earth.”

Excessive consumption contributes to physical harm and societal imbalance. This verse links overeating with broader forms of harm, reminding believers that portion control preserves both personal and collective well-being.

5.2 Prophetic Guidance on Portion Control (Hadith)

The Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ provides the most practical and compassionate explanation of portion control. His guidance addresses human appetite with wisdom, mercy, and realism.

In Hadith

مَا مَلَأَ آدَمِيٌّ وَعَاءَ شَرًّا مِنْ بَطْنٍ
(Tirmidhi)

Translation:

“The son of Adam fills no vessel worse than his stomach.”

This Hadith highlights the stomach as the center of excess. Overfilling it harms both body and soul, a fact now supported by metabolic research linking overeating to chronic disease (Hruby et al., 2015).

In Another Hadith

حَسْبُ ابْنِ آدَمَ لَفِيمَاتٍ يُفَمِّنَ صَلْبَهُ
(Tirmidhi)

Translation:

“It is sufficient for the son of Adam to eat a few mouthfuls to keep his back straight.”

This statement teaches contentment. Eating just enough to sustain strength encourages awareness and humility, principles central to mindful eating practices supported by modern nutrition science (Rolls et al., 2018).

Another Hadith

فَإِنْ كَانَ لَا مَحَالَةَ فَتَلْتِ لِبَطْنِهِ وَتَلْتِ لِشَرَابِهِ وَتَلْتِ لِنَفْسِهِ
(Tirmidhi)



Translation:

“If he must eat more, then one third for food, one third for drink, and one third for breath.”

This Hadith offers a gentle, practical structure for portion control. Leaving space for breath promotes calmness and proper digestion. Scientific evidence supports this wisdom, showing that stopping before fullness improves glucose regulation and metabolic health (Garaulet et al., 2013).

Scientific Support

Controlled portions reduce total energy intake, improve insulin sensitivity, and lower the risk of obesity and metabolic syndrome (Hall et al., 2019; Rolls et al., 2018). The Prophet’s guidance mirrors these findings with remarkable precision.

Closing Reflection

Together, the Qur’an and Sunnah present portion control as an act of balance, gratitude, and mercy toward the body. Eating less is not weakness in Islam; it is wisdom. By honoring limits, believers protect their health, preserve their spiritual awareness, and maintain harmony between body and soul.

6. Meal Timing in Islamic Teachings and Traditional Eating Practices

Meal timing plays an important role in Islamic dietary guidance, although it is addressed more through practice and wisdom than through rigid instruction. Islamic teachings encourage balance not only in what is eaten, but also in *when* food is consumed. This perspective aligns closely with modern nutritional science, which recognizes meal timing as a significant factor in metabolic health, energy regulation, and disease prevention.

6.1 Main Meal During the Day

In traditional Muslim and Arab societies, the main meal was commonly consumed during the daytime, particularly around midday. This practice was shaped by daily routines, physical activity, and environmental conditions, but it also reflects an intuitive understanding of human physiology. Daytime eating supports energy needs for work, worship, and movement, while allowing sufficient time for digestion before rest.

Modern scientific research supports this pattern, showing that insulin sensitivity, glucose tolerance, and metabolic efficiency are higher earlier in the day. Consuming a larger proportion of daily energy intake during daylight hours has been associated with better weight management and a lower risk of type 2 diabetes and metabolic disorders (Garaulet et al., 2013; Poggiogalle et al., 2018).

This approach resonates with the Islamic principle of balance, where nourishment is taken when the body can best utilize it. As one nutrition scholar states:

“The timing of food intake is as important as the amount consumed, particularly for metabolic health.”

Thus, the tradition of daytime-focused eating reflects both practical wisdom and health-conscious behavior.

6.2 Light Eating at Night

Islamic teachings consistently encourage simplicity and restraint, particularly in matters that affect physical comfort and spiritual focus. While eating at night is not prohibited, excessive or heavy meals late in the evening are discouraged through prophetic practice and scholarly interpretation. Light eating at night allows the body to rest, supports better sleep, and reduces physical discomfort.

It is reported that the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) preferred simple meals and avoided indulgence, especially close to rest. Scholars have noted that a light stomach promotes clarity of mind and ease in worship, particularly during night prayers. A reflective Islamic saying captures this wisdom:

“He who eats lightly sleeps peacefully, and he who sleeps peacefully worships with presence.”

From a scientific perspective, late-night overeating has been linked to impaired glucose metabolism, increased fat storage, and higher risk of obesity and metabolic syndrome (Hall et al., 2019). Lighter evening meals, in contrast, support circadian rhythm alignment and metabolic balance.

A brief waqia often mentioned in Islamic tradition describes the Prophet (P.B.U.H) sometimes going to sleep with mild hunger, teaching that restraint in eating nurtures patience and self-discipline. Though simple, this practice reflects deep concern for both physical well-being and spiritual growth.

7. Traditional Arab Eating Patterns and Lifestyle Practices

Traditional Arab eating patterns reflect a lifestyle shaped by environmental conditions, social values, and Islamic influence. These patterns emphasize simplicity during the day, hospitality toward guests, and a structured main meal consumed later in the afternoon. Unlike modern eating habits characterized by frequent snacking and late-night heavy meals, traditional Arab dietary practices followed a rhythm that naturally supported balance and moderation.

7.1 Main Meal Timing Around Asr

In many traditional Arab communities, the primary meal of the day was commonly consumed in the late afternoon, often around **Asr time**. This meal typically served as the main course and included staple foods such as rice, meat, bread, and vegetables. Eating the largest meal at this time allowed individuals to replenish energy after daytime activities while still leaving sufficient time for digestion before nightfall.

From a physiological perspective, this pattern aligns with evidence suggesting that consuming the main meal earlier in the evening rather than late at night supports better glucose metabolism and reduces metabolic strain (Garaulet et al., 2013). The preference for Asr-time meals reflects an intuitive understanding of bodily rhythms, long before modern circadian nutrition research emerged.

7.2 Light Daytime Intake: Dates and Simple Foods

Throughout the day, traditional Arab diets relied on light, nutrient-dense foods rather than continuous large meals. **Dates (khajoor)** played a central role, providing quick energy, fiber, and essential micronutrients. Dates were commonly consumed during work hours, travel, or moments of rest, offering sustenance without heaviness.

Scientific studies have shown that dates are rich in natural sugars, antioxidants, and dietary fiber, making them an effective source of sustained energy when consumed in moderation (Al-Farsi et al., 2007). This pattern of light daytime intake helped prevent excessive hunger while avoiding overeating later in the day.

7.3 Arabic Coffee (Qahwa) and Social Eating Practices

Arabic coffee (**qahwa**) holds a significant place in Arab culture and hospitality. Traditionally served to guests, qahwa is consumed in small quantities, often accompanied by dates. This practice reflects values of generosity, respect, and moderation. Coffee gatherings were social rather than indulgent, reinforcing connection without excess consumption.

Moderate coffee intake has been associated with improved alertness and potential metabolic benefits when consumed without added sugars or heavy accompaniments (Poole et al., 2017). The cultural practice of serving small portions aligns with Islamic and nutritional principles of restraint.

7.4 Dawat Culture and Communal Eating



Invitations for meals (**dawat**) in Arab culture were often arranged around Asr or early evening rather than late night. Communal eating emphasized sharing, gratitude, and mindful consumption. Guests were honored with food, yet overeating was traditionally discouraged through social norms and portion awareness.

Research suggests that communal meals eaten at structured times are associated with slower eating, better portion control, and improved digestion (Al-Othaimen et al., 2007). This social regulation naturally limited excess while strengthening community bonds.

7.5 Relevance to Modern Nutrition

Traditional Arab eating patterns characterized by a main afternoon meal, light daytime intake, modest evening consumption, and structured hospitality contrast sharply with modern lifestyles marked by irregular eating and nighttime overeating. These traditional practices align with contemporary dietary recommendations that promote earlier energy intake, reduced late-night eating, and culturally grounded moderation to prevent obesity and metabolic disorders (Poggiogalle et al., 2018).

8. Scientific Evidence Supporting Moderation, Portion Control, and Structured Eating

Over the past two decades, scientific research has increasingly confirmed that moderation in eating, appropriate portion sizes, and structured meal patterns are central to the prevention of lifestyle-related diseases. While modern dietary environments encourage constant eating and oversized portions, evidence from nutrition science consistently shows that long-term health is best supported by balanced intake rather than excess. These findings closely align with the dietary principles emphasized in the Qur'an and Sunnah, particularly restraint, balance, and mindful consumption.

Large-scale epidemiological studies have demonstrated that excessive energy intake is a primary driver of obesity and related metabolic disorders. Increased portion sizes lead to higher calorie consumption without a corresponding increase in satiety, resulting in positive energy balance and weight gain (Hall et al., 2019). Experimental studies further show that individuals tend to consume more food when served larger portions, regardless of hunger levels, highlighting the importance of portion control as a behavioral strategy (Rolls et al., 2018).

Moderation in eating has also been shown to improve metabolic regulation. Controlled energy intake supports insulin sensitivity, reduces chronic inflammation, and improves lipid profiles, all of which are key factors in preventing type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease (Hruby et al., 2015). These findings reinforce the Islamic emphasis on avoiding excess, not as a restriction, but as protection for the body.

Meal timing has emerged as another critical factor in metabolic health. Research in circadian nutrition demonstrates that consuming the majority of daily energy earlier in the day is associated with better glucose control, improved insulin response, and lower body fat accumulation. In contrast, late-night eating disrupts circadian rhythms and increases the risk of obesity and metabolic syndrome (Garaulet et al., 2013; Poggiogalle et al., 2018). This scientific evidence mirrors traditional Muslim and Arab eating patterns, where the main meal was consumed earlier and evening intake remained light.

An emerging area of research relevant to Islamic dietary guidance is **mindful eating**, which emphasizes awareness, gratitude, and internal cues of hunger and fullness. Studies indicate that mindful eating practices reduce overeating, emotional eating, and binge behaviors, while improving glycemic control and weight outcomes (Kristeller et al., 2014). This concept closely resembles the Islamic approach to eating with consciousness (*niyyah*) and restraint, transforming eating into an intentional act rather than an impulsive habit.

A unique integrative perspective is that Islamic dietary teachings function as an early behavioral nutrition model. Rather than focusing on numerical calorie limits, they shape eating behavior through values gratitude, moderation, accountability, and self-discipline. Modern nutrition science now recognizes that sustainable dietary change depends more on behavior and environment than on strict dietary rules alone (Willett et al., 2019). This suggests that Qur'anic dietary ethics may offer a culturally rooted and psychologically effective framework for long-term adherence.

Overall, scientific evidence strongly supports the principles of moderation, portion control, and structured eating patterns emphasized in Islamic teachings. When combined, these practices reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic syndrome, while promoting sustainable and balanced health behaviors. Integrating Islamic dietary guidance with contemporary scientific findings provides a comprehensive approach to addressing modern lifestyle diseases.

9. Balanced Eating and the Prevention of Lifestyle Diseases

Balanced eating plays a central role in reducing the risk of lifestyle-related diseases by supporting metabolic balance, healthy body weight, and cardiovascular function. Dietary patterns characterized by moderation, appropriate portion sizes, and structured meal timing address the underlying behavioral causes of chronic diseases and promote long-term health.

9.1 Obesity

Obesity is primarily driven by chronic excess energy intake, often resulting from large portion sizes and frequent overeating. Balanced eating helps prevent weight gain by maintaining energy equilibrium while ensuring nutritional adequacy. Scientific evidence shows that portion-controlled diets reduce total calorie intake and prevent gradual fat accumulation over time (Hall et al., 2019). By avoiding dietary excess and encouraging moderation, balanced eating supports healthy body composition and lowers obesity-related metabolic stress.

9.2 Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus

Balanced eating contributes significantly to diabetes prevention through improved glycemic regulation and insulin sensitivity. Moderate energy intake, combined with regular meal timing, reduces postprandial glucose fluctuations and improves metabolic control. Studies indicate that structured eating patterns and portion awareness are associated with lower risk of insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes (Hruby et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2018). These findings emphasize the importance of balance rather than extreme dietary restriction in diabetes prevention.

9.3 Cardiovascular Diseases

Cardiovascular health is strongly influenced by long-term dietary behaviors. Balanced eating patterns that avoid excess calories and emphasize moderation are associated with improved lipid profiles, lower blood pressure, and reduced systemic inflammation. Evidence from large clinical trials demonstrates that moderate, balanced diets reduce the risk of cardiovascular events and mortality (Estruch et al., 2018). By addressing key risk factors such as obesity, dyslipidemia, and insulin resistance, balanced eating plays a protective role in cardiovascular disease prevention.

9.4 Metabolic Syndrome

Metabolic syndrome represents a cluster of conditions, including central obesity, impaired glucose metabolism, hypertension, and dyslipidemia. Balanced eating directly targets these interconnected risk factors by promoting controlled energy intake and metabolic stability. Research suggests that dietary moderation and structured eating patterns significantly reduce

the prevalence of metabolic syndrome and its progression to more severe chronic diseases (Grundy et al., 2005).

10. Qur'anic Dietary Ethics in Contrast with Modern Eating Patterns

Qur'anic dietary ethics are deeply rooted in the principles of moderation, gratitude, responsibility, and respect for the human body. The Qur'an repeatedly reminds believers that food is a blessing (*ni'mah*) from Allah and that blessings must be used with awareness rather than excess. Eating, therefore, is not presented as a purely biological act but as a moral behavior that reflects self-discipline and balance. In contrast, modern eating patterns are largely shaped by convenience, commercialization, and constant food availability, often encouraging overeating and disregard for bodily limits.

A central ethical foundation of Qur'anic dietary guidance is the clear rejection of excess in consumption. Allah states:

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ
(Surah Al-A'raf 7:31)

This verse reinforces the idea that food is not insignificant; it is a blessing for which humans are accountable. From an ethical standpoint, habitual overeating and food waste reflect neglect of this responsibility. Modern dietary habits, characterized by food waste and overconsumption, stand in clear contrast to this Qur'anic ethic of mindful use.

The Qur'an also emphasizes *quality* alongside moderation. In Surah Al-Baqarah, believers are instructed to consume what is wholesome (*tayyib*), highlighting purity and benefit rather than mere quantity. Modern diets, however, are increasingly dominated by energy-dense but nutrient-poor foods. Nutrition science supports this Qur'anic principle, showing that dietary quality is central to preventing chronic diseases and supporting metabolic health (Willett et al., 2019).

A well-known scholarly observation captures this contrast effectively:

Modern dietary problems are driven less by hunger and more by excess, convenience, and loss of self-regulation.

Islamic ethical teachings address this loss at its root by cultivating self-awareness, gratitude, and limits. An often-cited Islamic ethical saying reflects this wisdom:

"Excess in eating hardens the heart and weakens the body."

In summary, Qur'anic dietary ethics offer a value-based framework that directly counters the imbalance of modern eating patterns. By emphasizing moderation, accountability, and mindful consumption, the Qur'an addresses the behavioral causes of lifestyle diseases rather than merely their physical outcomes. Integrating these ethical principles with modern nutritional science provides a holistic and sustainable approach to improving dietary behavior in contemporary societies.

11. Integrating Islamic Dietary Principles into Modern Nutrition Therapy

Modern nutrition therapy has increasingly recognized that long-term dietary change cannot be achieved through strict rules and calorie counting alone. Successful interventions require approaches that address behavior, values, and daily habits. In this context, Islamic dietary principles offer a meaningful framework that naturally supports healthy eating through moderation, awareness, and responsibility. Rather than viewing food as an enemy to be controlled, Islam frames eating as a balanced act that nourishes the body while maintaining self-discipline.

One of the most valuable contributions of Islamic guidance to nutrition therapy is its emphasis on moderation instead of restriction. Many individuals struggle with highly restrictive diets because they are difficult to maintain over time. Islamic teachings encourage balance, allowing enjoyment of food while discouraging excess. Research in nutrition science



supports this approach, showing that flexible and moderate dietary patterns are more effective for sustained weight management and metabolic health than rigid dieting (Hruby et al., 2015). Islamic teachings also promote mindful eating through gratitude, intention, and awareness of limits. Eating with consciousness rather than haste or distraction helps individuals recognize hunger and fullness cues more accurately. This closely resembles modern mindful eating practices, which have been shown to reduce overeating, emotional eating, and poor glycemic control (Kristeller et al., 2014). When nutrition counseling incorporates familiar Islamic values such as accountability and respect for the body as a trust (*amanah*), individuals may feel more personally connected to dietary advice.

In addition, Islamic traditions support structured eating patterns and discourage constant snacking and excessive late-night eating. Aligning meal timing with natural body rhythms has been associated with improved insulin sensitivity and better metabolic outcomes (Garaulet et al., 2013). When these scientific recommendations are presented alongside Islamic principles, they become easier to understand, accept, and follow.

Overall, integrating Islamic dietary principles into modern nutrition therapy creates a culturally sensitive and holistic approach to health. By combining scientific evidence with ethical and spiritual values, this model encourages sustainable eating behaviors that support both physical well-being and inner balance.

12. Public Health Implications of Balanced Eating from an Islamic Perspective

The rising burden of lifestyle-related diseases presents a serious public health challenge across the world, particularly in Muslim-majority societies where rates of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases are increasing rapidly. Public health strategies often focus on medical treatment and generalized dietary guidelines, yet they frequently overlook the cultural and ethical values that shape eating behavior. In this context, Islamic dietary principles offer a powerful and culturally relevant framework for promoting balanced eating at the population level.

Balanced eating, as emphasized in the Qur'an and Sunnah, naturally supports public health goals by discouraging excess, promoting moderation, and encouraging mindful consumption. These principles directly address the behavioral causes of chronic diseases, such as overeating, poor portion control, and irregular meal patterns. When public health messages are aligned with familiar religious values, they are more likely to be accepted, understood, and practiced within communities. Research shows that culturally grounded health interventions lead to better engagement and more sustainable behavior change (Willett et al., 2019).

Islamic teachings also emphasize personal responsibility and accountability, which can strengthen public health efforts aimed at prevention rather than treatment. Viewing the body as a trust (*amanah*) encourages individuals to care for their health proactively, reducing long-term strain on healthcare systems. From a public health perspective, this shift from reactive treatment to preventive behavior is essential for controlling the growing economic and social costs of lifestyle diseases (World Health Organization et al., 2023).

Moreover, integrating Islamic dietary ethics into public health education such as school programs, mosque-based awareness campaigns, and community nutrition counseling can help normalize balanced eating habits from an early age. Such approaches do not require complex medical language but rely on simple, value-based messages that resonate with everyday life. By combining scientific evidence with Islamic principles of moderation and balance, public health initiatives can promote healthier dietary patterns while respecting cultural identity.

Overall, applying Qur'anic concepts of balanced eating at the public health level offers a holistic and sustainable strategy for disease prevention. It bridges faith and science, supports



community engagement, and provides a meaningful pathway for addressing modern lifestyle diseases in a culturally sensitive manner.

13. Future Research Directions

Despite the clear alignment between Qur'anic dietary guidance and modern nutritional science, limited empirical research has systematically examined Islamic principles of balanced eating as a preventive health model. Future research should move beyond theoretical discussions and directly investigate how Qur'anic concepts such as moderation (*wasatiyyah*), avoidance of excess (*israf*), and mindful consumption influence dietary behavior, portion control, and long-term metabolic health.

One priority area for future research is the development and evaluation of **Islam-based dietary intervention models**. Controlled studies could assess whether nutrition education programs grounded in Qur'anic teachings and Prophetic guidance improve portion awareness, meal timing, and dietary quality more effectively than conventional nutrition counseling alone. Such evidence would strengthen the role of faith-based frameworks in preventing obesity, type 2 diabetes, and metabolic disorders.

Further research is also needed to explore **traditional Muslim eating patterns**, particularly the practice of consuming the main meal earlier in the day and limiting heavy evening intake. While circadian nutrition research supports these patterns, studies focusing specifically on Muslim populations are scarce. Longitudinal studies could clarify the metabolic benefits of these culturally rooted practices and their relevance to disease prevention.

In addition, qualitative research should examine how individuals interpret and apply Qur'anic dietary ethics in daily life. Understanding beliefs related to food as a blessing (*ni'mah*), the body as a trust (*amanah*), and accountability for consumption may help explain adherence to balanced eating practices. Such insights can inform culturally sensitive nutrition policies and counseling strategies.

Overall, future research that directly integrates Qur'anic dietary principles with nutritional science has strong potential to advance preventive health strategies. By focusing on moderation, portion control, and structured eating, this line of research can contribute to sustainable, culturally meaningful solutions for reducing lifestyle-related diseases.

14. Conclusion

Balanced eating, as emphasized in the Qur'an and Sunnah, represents a comprehensive and holistic approach to health that integrates physical well-being with ethical responsibility, self-discipline, and gratitude. The Islamic emphasis on moderation, portion control, mindful consumption, and structured eating patterns provides guidance that remains highly relevant in the modern era. These principles directly address the behavioral foundations of lifestyle-related diseases, including obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, and metabolic disorders.

This review highlights that many contemporary dietary challenges such as excessive portion sizes, frequent snacking, and heavy late-night eating stand in clear contrast to Qur'anic dietary ethics. Scientific evidence consistently supports the health benefits of moderation, controlled intake, and appropriate meal timing, reinforcing the practical wisdom embedded in Islamic teachings. Rather than promoting deprivation, Islam encourages balance, allowing nourishment while protecting the body from harm.

Traditional Arab eating practices further reflect these values in daily life. Historically, Arab communities favored a main meal earlier in the day or late afternoon and practiced light eating at night. Evening meals were simple, while heavy nighttime consumption was generally avoided. This tradition aligns closely with modern research showing that lighter

evening intake supports better digestion, metabolic regulation, and overall health. Such practices demonstrate how Islamic principles were naturally applied within cultural lifestyles. Importantly, integrating Islamic dietary guidance and traditional Arab eating patterns into modern nutrition practice and public health strategies offers a culturally sensitive and sustainable model for disease prevention. Viewing food as a blessing (*ni'mah*) and the body as a trust (*amanah*) fosters internal motivation and long-term adherence to healthy eating behaviors.

In conclusion, balanced eating in Islam supported by Qur'anic guidance, Prophetic practice, and traditional Arab lifestyles is not merely a religious recommendation but a scientifically supported preventive health framework. Reviving these principles can contribute meaningfully to addressing the growing burden of lifestyle diseases while promoting harmony between physical health, ethical conduct, and spiritual well-being.

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