

Muslims generally break their fast by eating dates. Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wassallam) is reported to have said: "if anyone of you is fasting, let him break his fast with dates. In case he does not have them, then with water. Verily water is a purifier."

The Prophet(sallallahu alaihi wassallam) used to break his fast by eating some dates before offering Maghrib prayer, and if ripe dates were not available, he used to substitute them with some dried grapes. When they too were not available, he used to have a few sips of water, according to some reports. Modern science has proved that dates are part of a healthy diet. They contain sugar, fat and proteins, as well as important vitamins. Hence the great importance attached to them by the Prophet(sallallahu alaihi wassallam).

Dates are also rich in natural fibers. Modern medicine has shown that they are effective in preventing abdominal cancer. They also surpass other fruits in the sheer variety of their constituents. They contain oil, calcium, sulphur, iron, potassium, phosphorous, manganese, copper and magnesium.

In other words, one date is a minimum of a balanced and healthy diet. Arabs usually combine dates with milk and yogurt or bread, butter and fish. This combination indeed makes a self-sufficient and tasty diet for both mind and body. Dates and date palms have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an 20 times, thus showing their importance. The Prophet(sallallahu alaihi wassallam) likened a good Muslim to the date palm, saying, "Among trees, there is a tree like a Muslim. Its leaves do not fall."

{loadposition bannersmiddle}

Sayyidah Mariam (the Virgin Mary) mother of Jesus (Pbuh) had dates as her food when she felt labour pains and during confinement. They are definitely the "crown of sweets," and ideal food which is easy to digest, and within half an hour of taking it, the tired body regains a renewed vigor. The reason for this is that a shortage of sugar in the blood is the main factor that makes people feel hungry and not an empty stomach as is often assumed. When the body absorbs the nutritional essence of a few dates, the feeling of hunger becomes appeased. When one breaking the fast with dates takes some other food afterwards, he cannot eat much. It would seem that breaking the fast with dates then helps one avoid excessive eating.

Experiments have also shown that dates contain some stimulants that strengthen the muscles

of the uterus in the last months of pregnancy. This helps the dilation of the uterus at the time of delivery on one hand and reduces the bleeding after delivery on the other. Dieticians consider dates as the best food for women in confinement and those who are breast-feeding. This is because dates contain elements that assist in alleviating depression in mothers and enriching the breast-milk with all the elements needed to make the child healthy and resistant to disease. The Prophet (salallahu alayhi wa salam )has emphasized the importance of dates and their effectiveness in the growth of the fetus. He has also recommended they be given to women. Modern dietary institute now recommend dates to be given to children suffering from a nervous nature or hyperactivity. The Prophet (salallahu alayhi wa salam )has also recommended dates as a medicine for heart troubles, according to some reports. Modern science has also proved the effectiveness of date, in preventing diseases of the respiratory system.

Sayyidah Ayesha, (R.A.) wife of Prophet (salallahu alayhi wa salam )used to prescribe dates for those suffering from giddiness. It is now well known that a fall in the level of the sugar in the blood and low blood pressure are among the causes of giddiness. She was also reported to have used dates combined with cucumber to treat her over-slim condition! She said, "they've tried to fatten me giving me everything. But I did not become fat. Then they fattened me with cucumber and ripe dates and I gained!" Ayisha was quite correct, as we now know that one kilogram of dates contains nearly 3,000 calories which alone are sufficient to supply the minimum daily requirements of an active man for one full day.

Dates are rich in several vitamins and minerals. When the level of trace elements falls in the body, the health of the blood vessels is affected leading to an increased heart-rate and a consequent inability to perform its function with normal efficiency. As dates are also rich in calcium, they help strengthen the bones. When the calcium content in the body decreases, children are affected with rickets and the bones of adults become brittle and weak.

Dates are also important in keeping up the health of eyes. It is quite effective in guarding against night-blindness. In the early years of Islam, dates served as food for Muslim warriors. They used to carry them in special bags hung at their sides. They are the best stimulant for muscles and so the best food for a warrior about to engage in battle.

The Prophet (salallahu alayhi wa salam ) used to combine dates with bread sometimes. At other times he mixed ripe dates with cucumber, or dates combined with ghee. He used to take all varieties of dates, but he preferred the variety called Ajwah.

