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Nutrition Tips

A common mistake made by many students during the exam period is to eat poorly and unhealthily.

For most students they are so busy with revision that they replace normal meals with Junk food e.g. high fat content takeaways, crisps, chocolate, energy drinks, and coffee.

However, this is not only harmful to your long-term health, but can also negatively affect your revision quality and exam performance.

For students who are fasting, good nutrition becomes even more crucial. When you break your fast, you have an opportunity to fill up on amazing, healthy foods that will give you long lasting energy and boost concentration for the next day.

Here are some healthy suggestions to keep you feeling your best, during this important time.

- At Iftar your body will be dehydrated, so it's important to drink plenty of fluids before filling up on food. Water is ideal, but fresh juices or smoothies are also a great way to get in fluids whilst providing vitamins and minerals. Coconut water is another refreshing option and is full of electrolytes. Try to have at least another serving of water by Sehri, or have sips throughout to ensure you are well hydrated the next day.
- Consider fluid-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, soups and stews as another way to stay hydrated, especially at Iftar. A juicy watermelon is a delicious starter to hydrate you before your main meal. Reduce salty foods too, as salt makes you thirsty.
- Try to eat a balanced diet focussed around whole foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, wholegrains (oats; brown rice; whole-wheat bread; whole-wheat pasta), protein sources (beans; pulses; fish; meat; eggs; quinoa; nuts & seeds) and healthy fats (nuts & seeds; avocado; coconut). This will ensure you have a slow release of energy and contribute towards a clearer head.
- Dark leafy greens are an essential part of a healthy diet, packed with Vitamin K and naturally occurring nitrates and antioxidants. Kale, chard, spinach and rocket are all great examples. Try adding to smoothies to disguise the taste, or sneak them into your main meal.
- Fresh fruits are much better for a 'sugar boost' than sweets or chocolate as they contain naturally occurring sugars. Darker coloured fruits like berries and dark grapes have been shown to improve memory whilst bananas and pears boost mood. However you'll feel the benefits of eating any fruit!



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- Omega 3 which is found in oily fish, flaxseeds, chia seeds and walnuts, is essential to keeping your brain working well. Try adding nuts or seeds to smoothies or sprinkle them on foods; or get some oily fish like salmon or sardines into your main meal.
- Dried fruits and nuts can be a delicious and healthy alternative to sweet deserts. Try dates or apricots dipped in peanut butter or almond butter; or go for a healthy snack such as a Nakd bar.
- Caffeine in the short-term can provide a useful boost, be careful not to drink too much and not to combine it with energy drinks, as too much caffeine could result in you being unable to focus properly. A good alternative is Green tea as it provides antioxidants as well as boosting your concentration.
- When you're extremely hungry it can be easy to eat anything in sight and forget these top tips, that's why planning is key. Try discussing with your family the importance of good nutrition during this time and see if they would also like to try adding some healthy recipes to the menu.
- You could get creative with different smoothie recipes and make them in advance, so it's easy to grab at Iftar, or even easier, purchase some ready-made healthy smoothies and juices to add to the menu as well as things like fruits, veggie sticks & hummus, coconut water, nuts and dried fruits.
- The Students' Union will be giving out free fruit as part of the Study Well campaign so keep an eye out for them on campus. Also, Sodexo will be offering discounts on healthy food to support your wellbeing, so look out for nutritional items that you can save for later!
- Something that goes hand in hand with good nutrition is exercise. You may not feel like doing a challenging workout and it's good to conserve energy, however it's important to still get some light exercise in during Ramadan. Something like a gentle walk for 20 minutes during the daylight hours is a perfect way to get some fresh air and take a beneficial break from revision.
- It's a good idea to practice fasting in advance too, to ease your body into it. For example fasting for a couple of days a week for a few weeks beforehand, or starting the fast a week early.



More information about healthy eating can be found on the NHS website:
<https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx>

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Credits

[Chris Barnes](#) for her hard work in putting the nutritional material together,

[Yasmin Bowmer](#) for her diligent work on well-being,

& Osman Ghani LLB

Musa Admani, City University Chaplaincy



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