

Nutritional Balance and Moderation: A Crucial Way of Life

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Abstract

Overweight and obesity are as a result of energy imbalance between energy consumed and energy expended. Diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers, and diabetes have resulted largely due to lack of balance and moderation in our habit towards nutrition. The objective of this special issue or paper is to raise awareness of the critical issue of balance and moderation in our diet habits. The methodology adopted for this special issue was literature search on the topic examined. There is a large body of researches that showed that healthy eating patterns (moderation and balance in eating) and regular physical activity can enhance good health and reduce the risk of communicable diseases throughout all stages of the lifespan. If there could be some amount of discipline or self-control such that people can put into practice some level of balance and moderation in their eating habits, obesity, overweight, and non-communicable diseases could also be lowered.

Keywords: Balance; Moderation; Nutrition

Introduction

It has been said that "Everything that exceeds the bounds of moderation has an unstable foundation" (Unknown author). Going to excess in life can be dangerous to life but balance and moderation is the guide to enjoy life in abundance. Balance and moderation should serve as the guidepost in everything we do in life especially in eating, sleeping, and exercise. Any food, however healthy it is, any exercise, however good it is, turns bad when we get over the limit of moderation mark. When we apply moderation in our life activities, we have peace of mind. For example both positive and negative thoughts keep our mind in balance. Excessive negative thoughts can damage our ability to do our best, and we may lose out on the balance in life. Moderation in choices, especially our needs, wants and desires give us clarity and stability in life. Moderation also gives us financial stability and balance: Maintaining the right balance of finance is crucial to our success in life [1].

When there is energy balance in the body, it means that the calories eaten is equal to the calories used by the body. Energy imbalance on the other hands refers to the fact that calories ingested are more than calories used. The excess calories not used by the body will then be deposited in the body in a form of fat. The rapid rise in obesity in the world today is due to the huge energy imbalance. The occurrence of obesity in the developed world today has risen more than three times since the last three decades in adult and about half of these are clinically obese with BMI more than 30 [2].

According to the WHO [3]: "more than 41 million children under the age of 5 were overweight or obese in 2016 and over 340 million children and adolescents aged 5-19 were overweight or obese in 2016. Further, WHO indicated that the number of overweight or obese infants and young children (aged 0 to 5 years) increased from 32 million globally in 1990 to 41 million in 2016. In the WHO African Region alone the number of overweight or obese children increased from 4 to 9 million over the same period." Without intervention, obese children will likely continue to be obese during childhood, adolescence and adulthood. More so, obesity in childhood is associated with a wide range of serious health complications and an increased risk of premature onset of illnesses, including diabetes and heart disease.

Most of these weight gain problems in the world today stems from lack of nutritional balance and moderation. Nutrition balance and moderation is simply the of concepts of healthful eating. Food largely forms part of culture and we use food in our social celebrations and it is to be enjoyed. That is the reason why balance and moderation is the secret maintaining health and right weight.

Nutritional balance

A healthy diet has to do with balancing the quality and quantity of food eaten. The typical whole food should give us the vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates, fats, and fiber that are necessary to good health. Attaining balance in the diet involves not eating one

nutrient to the detriment of another. For example, calcium is crucial for the health of the teeth and bones, but excessive calcium can restrict iron absorption. We know very well that, foods that are good sources of iron are poor sources of calcium. For one to benefit from calcium and iron from the diet, there be a suitable balance of food choices. Again, it is well known that sodium is a critical nutrient but too much of it can lead to heart and kidney diseases [4]. So nutritional balance may mean consuming just the correct quantity of calories, macronutrients and micronutrients from our diet.

In an optimal state of nutrition, all our nutritional body needs are met without going beyond the caloric needs of our body. Sustaining a stable healthy weight, having acceptable cholesterol, and healthful blood-pressure are just the signs of being nutritionally balanced [5]. The food proportion served usually, tend to exceed what we consumed in one sitting. One need to beware of the gender, height, activity level and age which can influence our calorie intake. It can be said to be a good practice of moderation when one eats a little bit more than what is listed as serving size but consuming a whole or half a box of cereal, on the other hand, is no longer considered a practice of moderation. The sad story is that more than 90% of the Americans for example do not meet their daily vegetable recommendations needs. Just about 15% of Americans meet their fruit recommendations [6]. The practice of moderation and eating variety of foods can help weight loss. Moderation, though a subjective term but can still help us stay healthy. As we pay attention to hunger, we should also let balance and moderation guide us in our choices.

Science has helped tremendously to subdue communicable diseases to some extent with immunization but at the same time, we have replaced communicable diseases with non-communicable diseases. The emergence and rise of non-communicable diseases relate to imbalance in our food choice and over indulgence in eating couple with physical inactivity. About half of the adult population of the United States of America for example have one or more preventable, diet-related chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and overweight and obesity [7]. However, research has shown that healthy eating patterns (moderation and balance in eating) and regular physical activity can enhance good health and reduce the risk of communicable diseases throughout all stages of the lifespan. The dietary guidelines for the Americans indicate that healthy food choice and self-control can prevent a whole lots of non-communicable diseases.

We can define balanced diet as a balance of protein, carbohydrates, and fat within the satisfactory macro and micronutrients supply ranges. A balanced meal, on the other hand, refers to a balance of food groups. If balance in our food choices is altered, problem will inevitably occur. Energy balance is associated with weight maintenance, while energy imbalance can contribute to weight loss or weight gain.

Nutritional moderation

You have probably heard the phrase "everything in moderation?" Merriam-Webster dictionary defines moderation as "observing reasonable limits and avoiding extremes in behavior or expression" [8]. Eating in moderation therefore could apply to eating only as much food as your body needs and consuming only those foods that are not outside the boundaries of normal human consumption. But what exactly does "moderation" mean? There is no scientific definition to the term but there are recommendations on how many calories should be consumed.

Before we go further, there is one term I would like to introduce which can best be discussed with moderation which is more or less a synonyms. The term is "temperance." According to White [9], temperance means "Total abstinence from harmful foods and substances and moderate use of those that are good for the body". White therefore introduces moderation in eating, dressing, labor, studying, seeking riches, and in all things [9]. True temperance or moderation is self-control in action. In other words, we use those things that are beneficial to our physical, mental, and spiritual interests. It involves totally avoiding or completely staying away from harmful substances but we used in moderation those that are healthy for the body. This helps to maintain the state of the body in a highest functional capacity. This kind of practice will also help to promote and maintain the body at all times in a maximum physical function. In so doing, the intellectual and religious faculties will always be of the highest quality.

The world today has a huge problem with moderation. The average American for example is supposed to ingest about 2,000 calories per day. So, if this is divided into three meals and two snacks, the average American will need around 500 to 600 calories per meal and around 125 to 250 calories per snack. Statistics showed that the United States of American has major diet-related health problems. About half of the American adults which is about 117 million have one or more preventable chronic diseases that relate to lack of balance and moderation in food choices and physical inactivity. These chronic diseases ranges from cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and diet-related cancers. Furthermore, about two-thirds of adults and nearly one-third of children and youth are overweight or obese [10]. For example the per capital food consumption in kcal per person per day is found in table 1.

The trend shows that the per capita food consumption per person is increasing by the years. The danger and the implication is that the world may be crossing the limit of moderation which can result in being susceptible to diseases especially in the developed world. The world nowadays have become so used to disproportionate portions that people may serve four to five times a standard portion at home. People also understand moderation to be being "good" during the week and eating the "bad" things over the week-

Region	1969/1971		1989/1991	1999/2001	2015	2030	2050
World	2411	2549	2704	2789	2950	3040	3130
Developing countries	2111	2308	2520	2654	2860	2960	3070
Sub-Saharan Africa	2100	2078	2106	2194	2420	2600	2830
Near East/North Africa	2382	2834	3011	2974	3080	3130	3190
Latin America and Caribbean	2465	2698	2689	2836	2990	3120	3200
South Asia	2066	2084	2329	2392	2660	2790	2980
East Asia	2012	2317	2625	2872	3110	3190	3230
Industrial countries	3046	3133	3292	3446	3480	3520	3540
Transition countries	3323	3389	3280	2900	3030	3150	3270

Table 1: The Adult population per capita food consumption table (kcal per person per day). Used with permission from [11].

end. So to some people, successfully abstaining from the wrong foods during the week is what they consider eating in moderation. Moderation could mean stop before you hurt yourself or stop before it adds up to more calories than you can tolerate without adverse effects. It can also mean one should stop eating before it produces an imbalance in your diet, or your body. The ability to do this requires self-knowledge and self-awareness of fundamental nutritional principles. It is worth noting that every step toward a healthy lifestyle is a step worth taking. Moderation is about being able to discipline oneself such that we are able to vary our diet depending on our appetite, cravings, and activity level on a daily basis.

Nutritional Moderation is very crucial for the health of the body. It is a way of saying one does not have to deprive himself or herself of food but at the same time one should not have excess. The question is how does one decide what is too much? Where do we draw that invisible line between what is acceptable and what is excess when it comes to eating? First of all, we should establish that moderation is not abstaining from whole food groups, or having rigid rules around mealtimes neither is it attaching guilt or shame to foods. More so, moderation is not needing to compensate through diet and exercise for "bad" food eaten or not avoiding social situations because of food, or not feeling uncomfortable with foods and it is never depriving oneself of food [12]. Eating in moderation plays an important role in longevity. Research has documented that a diet eaten in a moderation and in a balanced way can give us the benefit of less heart attacks and strokes, fewer weight problems, lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, less diabetes, less breast cancer, less colon cancer, less prostate cancer etc. Too little food causes one to suffer from under-nutrition, whereas too much food causes over-nutrition, with its various health problems. Living a balanced life is, therefore, the way of life to longevity, and to being a better person.

Conclusion

The practice of balance and moderation in our eating habits, will reduce the incidence of obesity, overweight, and non-commu-

nicable diseases. Though eating in moderation will not be the same for everyone but it is important to find what works for you in other to reach and maintain your optimum health. The literature review of this special issue provides some evidence for an overweight and obese individuals to adopt this practice in other to transition to optimum health. It also provides awareness for those who practicing it to continue with the habit so that they can continue to enjoy good health.

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