

Malaysians not eating enough fruit

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Credit: Pix Ikhwan Hashim, Health Ministry

Malaysians should eat more fruit and vegetables to help stave off obesity and other life-style related diseases.

Epidemiological studies indicate that fruit intake will lower the risk of [coronary heart diseases](#), hypertension and strokes and may prevent cancer and slow down the aging process, said Prof Aminah Abdullah, an expert in Food Science at the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST), The National University of Malaysia (UKM).

Fruit, as with [vegetables](#), have been considered to be protective food containing vitamins, minerals and fibres, but are now even more important due to their antioxidant content, said Prof Aminah.

"Obesity is a disease, not a decision. Obesity is a disease where there's improper diet. Obesity has been on the increase in Malaysia since 2011. In 2014 49% of women and 44% of men were found to be obese.

Fruit are part of functional foods that include specialty crops, tree fruit, berries, coloured potato and vegetables.

"There are also 'super fruit' that have anti-oxidant, anti-ageing, and anti-inflammation properties while also improving eye-sight. Some examples are pears, watermelon and soursop (durian belanda).

"Banana is a common fruit that is easily available and is ulcerogenic, at least against gastric ulcers. It staves off constipation, depression and strokes. Fruit have comparatively little fat or protein," she said.

Another common fruit that that is attracting a lot of attention is pink guava (jambu batu) which have anti-oxidant and anti-diabetic properties.

In her lecture titled Fruit: A trendy approach for maintaining optimal health, she said a person needs at least two servings of fruit a day and three of vegetables as part of the diet to maintain health.

"All over the World many people are not taking enough fruits. There are

seven fruits specifically mentioned in the Quran that offers various benefits for health; figs, olives, dates, pomegranate, grapes and Indian Jujube. Fruit such as apples sometimes are no longer safe due to the presence of pesticide residue and other contaminants," said Prof Aminah in her public lecture here on September 29.

Sometimes, she said, fruit and vegetables can be processed into more attractive products such as juices and beverages, nutritious and tasty fruit bars and other innovative products.

She explained that all countries, including Malaysia, provide guidelines in the form of a 'Food Pyramid' which recommends a person consumes at least two servings of fruit each day but less salt, fat, oil and sugar.

"Fruit contains fructose (corn syrup) and glucose – simple sugars that are easy to absorb than sucrose, which is a processed complex sugar that is less healthy because it is not easily absorbed. Sucrose requires the enzyme sucrase to break it down to the two monosaccharides. It is more expensive than corn syrup and promotes tooth decay.

"If you are not diabetic, then eat as much ([fruit](#)) as you can. But consult a doctor first," she advised.

Provided by UKM

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