- Health

Avoid even small servings of ‘ultra-processed’ food

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Food can greatly influence the way we think, behave and act. During this holy season, while we reflect on cleansing our mind and body, it is time we take notice of our eating pattern.

In recent decades, studies have shown that for the sake of convenience, we have adapted to more than 60 per cent of processed food on our plate.

We may be unknowingly taking excess calories by consuming even small servings of ultra-processed foods. Intake of highly refined sugar and fat can lead to oxidative stress and inflammation, putting us at a risk of diabetes, fatty liver, strokes and poor recovery post infection.

Prolonged consumption of ultraprocessed foods can even trigger the onset of some auto-immune conditions. It damages the cells of our stomach and intestine leading to hyperacidity, ulcers, genetic mutation, cancer and poor nutrient absorption.

These are the valid reasons why health professionals are constantly educating the public on eating healthy, wholesome natural foods for Iftar and Suhoor. Processed foods can greatly reduce the good effects on health during Ramadan fasting.

We need to understand that not all processed foods are unhealthy. Some less processed foods which do not affect nutritional content and have Fda-approved ingredients can be consumed on a less occasional basis. Some of them are: low-fat, long-life dairy products; whole fibre cereals; unsweetened, trans-fat-free, plant-based milk alternatives; and frozen natural fruits and vegetables, among others.

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There is nothing more healthy and complete than a home-cooked, love-filled disease proof meal with family.”