

## Health Talk 5: Eat healthy at home

**En Ee:** Hello, everyone! Welcome back to the 5th episode of MMI Podcast: Medicine& Wellness! My name is **En Ee** and I'll be hosting the episode today: Eat healthy at home. The implementation of MCO has allowed us to spend more time at home and for today's episode, we will be discussing how to eat healthy at home at a relatively low cost. Today, we are honoured to have **Shanice Tan Li Ying** with us, who is currently a nutrition consultant. Without further ado, let us welcome **Shanice!**

**Shanice Tan:** Hello and good morning everyone! Thank you En Ee for hosting this interesting episode, it is indeed a useful topic to be discussed with many working or studying from home nowadays.

**En Ee:** Good morning Ms Shanice. Would you like to introduce yourself to the audience?

**Ms Shanice Tan:** Yeah sure. Coming from a nutrition science background, I spent years in the health and nutrition field and continue gaining passion in it. I'm glad that it has equipped me with the ability to distinguish between the correct nutrition information and false nutrition claims. As a registered nutritionist of NSM, I focus on community health & wellness as well as providing consultation & education, I often meet people who are passionately curious about how proper food and nutrition are able to change their life. I firmly believe that small and simple changes in daily life work best for establishing long-term healthy habits, it is important to start with realistic and practical approaches in achieving goals. Feel free to connect with me and my dietitian partner through "Nutrition Living" or "Food Story MY" on Facebook, we share applicable nutrition info through daily meals and make healthy eating practical. Just a side note, I'm not completely avoiding comfort foods like ice creams, cakes, chocolates; instead, making the right choice in selecting which to eat, and practicing mindful eating are important.

**En Ee:** Thank you for sparing your time to share with us your thoughts on how to eat healthy at home today. It's our honour to have you here with us! So, should we start with some questions, Shanice?

**Ms Shanice Tan:** : Yes sure.

**En Ee:** Great, Shanice! To start off, could you enlighten us on **how we can plan the 3 meals of the day? Are there any recommendations for the preparations of breakfast, lunch and dinner?**

**Ms Shanice Tan:** Yes, there are some recommendations for scheduling the 3 main meals in a day, it is very important to avoid overeating and digestive problems. I trust that many of you heard of this before - the best way to live is to breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a pauper.

It means that to maintain a healthy weight, people should make breakfast the largest meal of the day, and skip supper. Eating a large breakfast actually reduces hunger cravings throughout the day. However, many misunderstood that we should eat a lot during breakfast. The fact about “to breakfast like a king” is to choose the right choice of food as your breakfast.

So what is the best for breakfast? **It is important to include protein in your breakfast.** Protein-rich foods, such as meat, fish, eggs, dairy, they could help to increase your metabolism for a few hours. They do so by requiring your body to use more energy to digest them. This is known as the **thermic effect of food**. Protein has a much higher thermic effect (20-30%) compared to carbohydrate (5-10%) and fat (0-3%), meaning that **your body burns more calories when digesting protein.**

**By replacing carbs and fat with protein during breakfast, you reduce the hunger hormone and boost several satiety hormones.** This leads to a reduction in hunger and keeps you feeling full for a longer period of time.

Speaking of the suggestions for the 3 main meals, it is very much related to the culture and preference of a person. It is always suggested to go for balanced meals - moderate amount of carbohydrates, adequate protein, limit fat. Vegetables are inexpensive and important sources of many nutrients, especially dietary fiber.

**En Ee:** Well said, Shanice! I think I have some ideas on how to prepare my 3 meals now. **Is there any advice you would like to give for people who don't really know how to cook? Or perhaps plan to start cooking but have no clues where to start?**

**Ms Shanice Tan:**

The best advice that I can give is “**go simple**”.

Start by choosing one ingredient that you love the most. If you love pasta, choose your favourite type of pasta. There is no motivator for cooking, like the love for food! And next, attempt the easiest recipe that you can find. Nowadays there are many free recipes that you can have as a reference by looking up **Youtube videos**.

After that you can start making a list of the ingredients that are needed. For your first attempt, I would suggest to go for only a few key ingredients or the most simple ingredients that are easy to find. Pasta as the source of carbohydrate, tomatoes/broccoli as vegetables, lean meats/eggs as protein source, adding onions/garlics which are good sources of antioxidants.

If you need motivation, **host cooking parties with friends virtually, go online**, this way of cooking can be really fun!

**En Ee:** I see. That's a brilliant idea to host cooking parties with friends virtually.

Also, Shanice, Is it true that **healthy food (eg - berries, yogurt, granola bars) are always more expensive than processed food? If so, how to eat cheaply while staying healthy?**

**Ms Shanice Tan:** : People are very conscious about being healthy nowadays and willing to spend on healthy foods. There are perceptions about being healthy: getting higher price, higher quality ingredients or foods, are considered as healthy.

Undeniably one of the truths in the market is organics/refined grains/gluten-free/low GI/healthy fat containing foods are of higher prices as compared to those that are not, however that **does not mean that all healthy foods are pricey**, because it is **all about choice**.

For example, the inexpensive protein sources you can get are eggs, poultry (lean chicken meat), fish, legumes (chickpeas, lentils), as compared to protein bars. Berries (which are high in antioxidants) are pricey as they are seasonal fruits and need extra care in handling, there are many other choices which are high in antioxidants such as green leafy vegetables (spinach and kales), grapes, broccoli, garlics and onions. Also, you can get different types of minerals and vitamins from inexpensive vegetables and fruits.

**En Ee:** Thanks for shedding the light and clearing the doubts, Shanice! I definitely learn a lot from your detailed explanation. **In view of the current situation of MCO, people tend to binge food due to stress and also boredom which is leading them to encounter this condition. Do you have any recommendations of snacks for them that are healthy and nice to eat whenever they want?**

**Ms Shanice Tan:** Inevitably staying home, working from home, can lead to the tendency to binge eating. My recommendation is go for **small, frequent meals**.

If you feel hungry in between main meals, or before sleep, always choose **light and low fat snacks**.

**The best suggestion of snacks during midday is fruits** (such as 1 banana, 1 apple, 1 orange, 1 slice of papaya etc). I'm suggesting one very simple snack that you can prepare at home, which is a nutritious fruit cereal bowl. Pick one type of fruit that you like (for example banana), add raisin, cereal/oat, low fat yoghurt or low fat milk, kidney beans or some seeds (optional), that is!

If hunger pangs attack before you go to bed, always go for light beverages, such as a glass of low fat milk or nutritional powdered drinks. **Try skipping supper for 30 days, you will feel the change in your body, and probably, your skin.**

**En Ee:** I see, Shanice. **This is really a great piece of info for people who love snacking. Nowadays, people tend to live a very hectic life. Hence, protein shake and protein bars**

**seems to be a second resolution for the majority when they plan to skip a meal. So, can protein shake/ protein bars replace food with high protein (eg - fish/ egg)?**

**Ms Shanice Tan:** Protein bars/shakes are indeed a convenience source of protein for the young and affordable groups, other than sport persons or athletes. It is a popular midday snack, a quick way to add protein and other nutrients to a busy and active lifestyle.

The differences between protein bars/shakes vs lean protein food such as fish, poultry, egg are in its nutrition contents, which are the source of protein, micronutrients, additional ingredients such as sugar/sweeteners, and protein bars/shakes vary in its ingredients used.

First of all, **sources of protein used in bars/shakes varies**. Some bars feature a mix of soy, whey or other types of proteins. In addition to offering protein and carbs, protein bars can be a good source of micronutrients, such as calcium, iron, potassium, and vitamins.

Protein bars/shakes can be a simple ready to eat midday snack, however, many protein bars also contain high amounts of added sugar and use sweeteners. Therefore it is highly recommended to **always examine the ingredient labels**.

**En Ee:** Ah I see, in addition to that, **there has been this saying that egg yolk is not good for elderly, is that true? What is the recommended maximum daily intake of egg/ person?**

**Ms Shanice Tan:** Eggs are the cheapest source of protein. The egg yolk, this golden part of an egg is much more nutritionally dense. It contains essential nutrients such as carotenoids, vitamin D, B12, selenium and choline. The **carotenoids** present in the yolk act as **antioxidants**, which can prevent or slow damage to cells. **Choline**, a **water-soluble vitamin** that is present in the egg yolk also has many benefits to our body including brain development and metabolism. One interesting fact is that the yolk of a large egg holds about 55 calories while the white part has 17 calories.

**Egg yolk is not good for elderly only when it is over consumed**. It is also one of the concerns for elderly with diseases such as heart disease. This is mainly due to the fact that egg yolks contain cholesterol. As cholesterol can cause risk of diseases, they should be consumed in moderation. There is no problem having egg yolk everyday.

Unlike the yolk, **egg white contains almost no fat, and negligible carbohydrate content**. For sedentary individuals, **the recommended daily intake of protein by RDA and DRI is 0.8g of protein/kg body weight, or 1g of protein/kg body weight**. For a 60kg individual, you will need appx 50g of protein per day. If you only obtain protein source from eggs in a day, you can have **appx 7 egg white per day for a 60kg individual**.

**En Ee:** Oh, I see Shanice! Thank you so much for the clarification. But Shanice, **how do we estimate the food portion to prevent overcooking and overeating. As people tend to finish the leftovers to prevent wastage of food.**

**Shanice Tan: Be mindful.** It is a simple yet powerful word for all who're living in this fast paced world.

Avoid eating until you're full. Instead, mind your **Hara Hachi Bu Point**. (Hara hachi bu is a Japanese phrase translated to **"Eat until you are 80% full"**.) It is how our mind works - the more you practice mindfulness, the better emotional/physical/spiritual state you will be in. Psychologists have proven that this approach is helpful because the mind instructs you to stop eating when you feel only slightly full. This is good advice for overeaters who are learning how to fulfill the satiety just enough

**En Ee: oh well, I think practicing mindfulness is really important nowadays. Also Shanice, is it almost inevitable for us to have rice for every meal. In a situation like this, what type of rice is better, given that we have white rice, brown rice, basmati rice etc? Or is there any food which provides a similar satiation as rice ?**

**Ms Shanice Tan:** Choosing the right type of rice is one of the main concerns for diabetes patients. For a normal individual who is taking preventive steps towards avoiding obesity and diabetes, **it is the amount of rice being taken that matters**. I would like to share with you a difference between the types of rice - it is the **GI (Glycemic Index)**. In general, white rice has a higher GI as compared to brown rice and basmati rice. **The higher the GI, the faster the carbohydrates are converted into glucose, and thus causing large increases in blood sugar levels.** Low GI foods increase glucose slowly in your body. Foods with a high GI increase blood glucose quickly. If you have diabete, high GI foods can make it harder to control diabetes.

If you are bored with taking rice, you can substitute 1 flat cup of rice with other sources of carbohydrates, such as half bowl of noodles, 2 slices of bread, 1 tortilla wrap, 2 medium size potatoes/sweet potatoes.

**En Ee:** Thanks for the clarification! I really learned a lot from this conversation about how to eat healthy at home. Before we end the episode, what would be your takeaway message for our audience?

**Ms Shanice Tan:**

3 take home message:

- Be mindful. Practice mindful living and mindful eating.
- Go for small, frequent meals. Include protein in your breakfast, choose lower fat/carbs.
- Healthy foods are not expensive. Go for fresh food and avoid processed food such as canned foods/instant noodles. And, go for fruits as snacks vs chips/cookies.

**The food choice is yours!**

**En Ee:** Thank you so much for your valuable insight and advice, Shanice!  
It has been wonderful having you on the podcast.

**Ms Shanice Tan:** Thank you En Ee. It's a great pleasure to be here.

**En Ee:** We would also like to thank our audience for tuning in. Like and share this podcast with your friends if you found it useful and don't forget to follow and rate our podcast on Spotify and iTunes. If you have any feedback for us, you can message us through MMI Malaysia's Facebook page. Stay tuned for our next episode of MMI Podcast: Medicine & Wellness! Take care and stay safe! Till then!