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## TheTeam

**Kay Mathy** | Publisher  
kaymathy@revonmedia.com

**Law Beng Chee** | Chief Executive Officer  
bclaw@revonmedia.com

### EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

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### EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

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johnson@revonmedia.com

**Khirtini K Kumaran** | Editor  
khirtini@revonmedia.com

**Sheila Rozario** | Contributing Editor  
sheila@revonmedia.com

**Fatihah Manaf** | Writer  
fatihah@revonmedia.com

**Adeline Anthony Alphonso** | Writer  
adeline@revonmedia.com

**Zafirah Zafruddin** | Writer  
zafirah@revonmedia.com

**Farisha Rahman** | Writer  
farisha@revonmedia.com

**a.azam** | Creative Director  
a.azam@revonmedia.com

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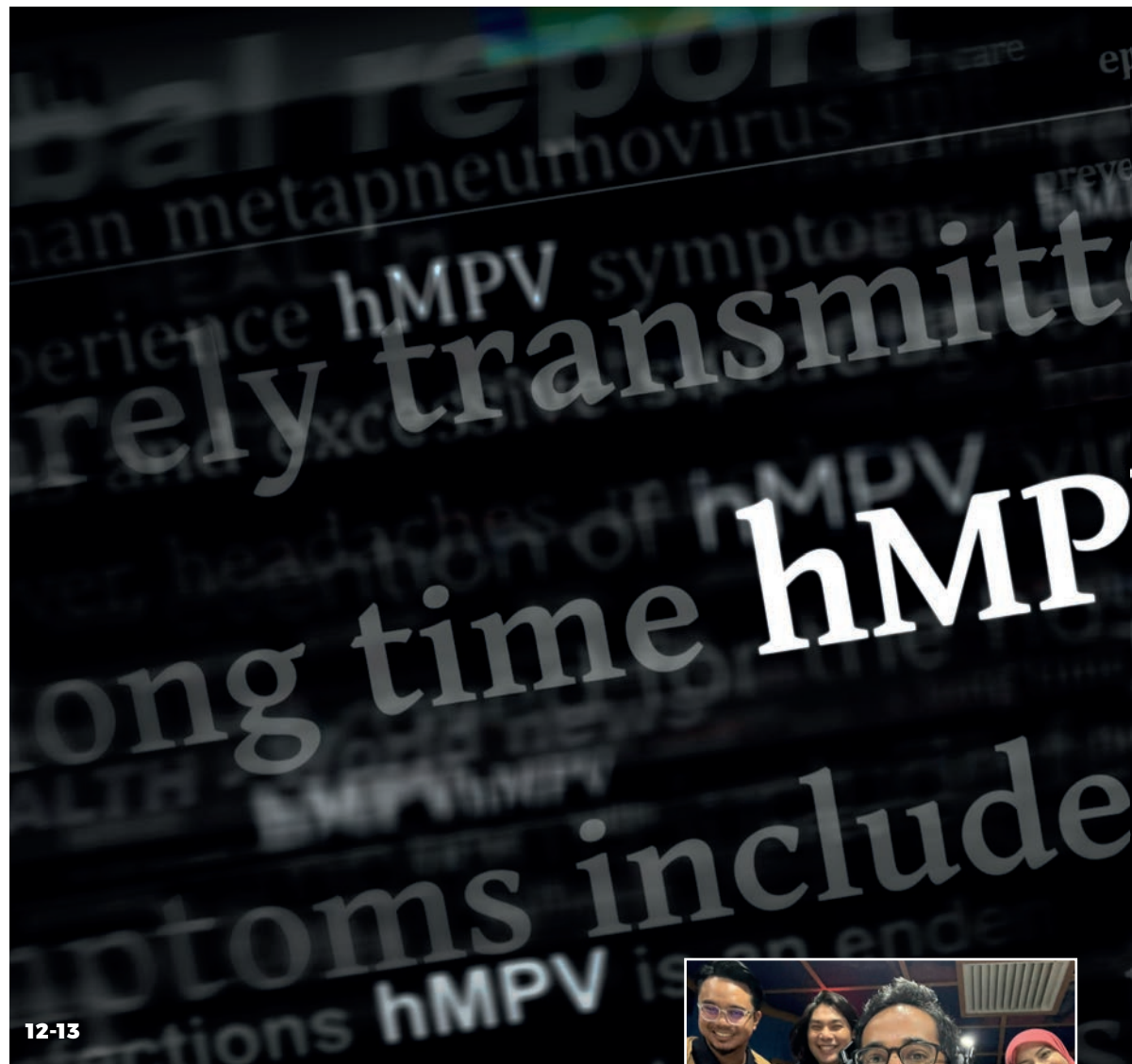
**Sahana** | Media Director  
sahana@revonmedia.com

**Hash Plus Media** | Media Associate  
marketing@hashplusmedia.com

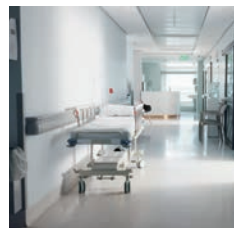
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Industri Desa Aman, Kepong,  
52200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.  
Tel: +603 6279 9474  
+6 03 6263 1856  
Fax: +603 6280 6802

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### SMART PARTNERSHIP





# Wrap them in a blanket!

Why pairing carbohydrates with protein or fat is key to balanced nutrition



BY AMALA A. M.  
ELGHARBAW



AND ANIS NAJIHA  
AHMAD

International  
Institute for Halal  
Research and  
Training (INHART),  
International  
Islamic University  
Malaysia (IIUM)

**I**N THE world of nutrition, we often hear a lot about the importance of macronutrients: carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. Carbohydrates, in particular, have been the subject of much debate.

Are they suitable for you? Should you avoid them? The answer is not as simple as a yes or no. The trick is not to eat your carbohydrates “naked” but rather to “wrap them in a blanket” of protein or fat. This simple habit can have profound effects on your health, energy levels, and even your weight.

## UNDERSTANDING CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are a primary source of energy for the body. They come in two primary forms: simple and complex. Simple carbohydrates include sugars found in foods like fruits, milk, and sweet treats, while complex carbohydrates are found in foods like grains, legumes, and vegetables.

When we consume carbohydrates, our body breaks them down into glucose molecules (sugar), which are then used for energy. However, the rate at which this process happens depends on the type of carbohydrate we consume.

Simple carbohydrates are broken down quickly, leading to a rapid spike in blood sugar levels. Complex carbohydrates, on the other hand, take longer to break down, resulting in a slower, more sustained release of glucose into the bloodstream.

## EATING CARBS ON ITS OWN

Eating carbohydrates on their own - whether it's a piece of bread, a bowl of pasta, or even a banana - can cause a quick rise in blood sugar levels. This spike is followed by a sharp drop, which can leave us tired, hungry, and craving more carbs. This cycle can be particularly troublesome if we are trying to manage our weight or maintain steady energy levels throughout the day.

When blood sugar levels spike, the body releases insulin to help bring them back down. If this happens frequently, it can lead to insulin resistance, where cells become less responsive to insulin, making it harder for the body to manage blood sugar levels. Over time, this can increase the risk of developing type II diabetes.

## THE SOLUTION

The solution to this problem is surprisingly simple: don't eat your carbohydrates naked. Instead, “wrap them in a blanket” of protein or fat. This practice slows down the digestion and



absorption of carbohydrates, leading to a more gradual rise in blood sugar levels. This not only helps keep energy levels stable but also reduces the likelihood of overeating.

Here's how it works: When we eat protein or fat along with carbohydrates, they act as a buffer, slowing the digestion process. This results in a slower, more steady release of glucose into the bloodstream, preventing the rapid spikes and crashes that can leave you feeling sluggish or craving more sugar (Inchauspé, 2022).

So enjoying your favourite slice of cake or dessert is possible now. A simple amendment is to consume that dessert after a meal rich in protein and fibre, such as grilled chicken with quinoa and steamed vegetables, to slow the absorption of sugar into your bloodstream.

## BREAKFAST EXPERIMENT

To illustrate the impact of this approach, let's look at Aminah's experience. Aminah, a 40-year-old who enjoys a morning routine of a pastry and a latte, noticed her energy would crash a few hours after breakfast.

Curious about the effects on her blood sugar, she decided to measure it after eating her usual breakfast. Two hours after consuming the pastry and latte, her blood sugar level spiked to

7.8 mmol/L. After learning about the benefits of pairing carbohydrates with protein and fat, Aminah decided to try a different breakfast.

The following day, she had two eggs and 40 grams of avocado on a slice of sourdough bread, accompanied by the same latte. This time, when she checked her blood sugar two hours later, it was a normal level of 5.4 mmol/L. The difference was striking.

By adding protein from the eggs and healthy fats from the avocado, Aminah was able to slow down the absorption of the carbohydrates in the sourdough, leading to a much more stable blood sugar level.

## PROPHETIC WISDOM

Interestingly, this approach is not a new concept; it has roots in the eating practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In several Hadiths, it is recorded that the Prophet would combine foods in a way that modern nutrition now supports.

One such example is the Prophet's practice of eating dates with cucumbers. Dates are rich in natural sugars (carbohydrates), while cucumbers are low in calories and high in water and fibre content, which can balance the effects of the sugar.

Similarly, there are Hadiths that

## PAIRING CARBOHYDRATES WITH PROTEIN OR FAT

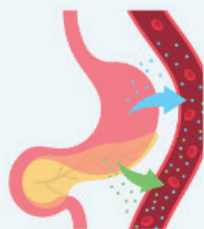
*a key to toyyib lifestyle*



WRAPPED CARBS



Stable Sugar



Stable Insulin



CARBS ON ITS OWN



Sugar Spikes



Unstable Insulin



HEALTHY & ACTIVE

UNHEALTHY & LOW IN ENERGY

mention the Prophet pairing bread with vinegar [Sunan Ibn Majah 3318] or olive oil [Sahih Muslim 2974]. This combination introduces healthy fats to balance the carbohydrate content of the bread [Izham et al., 2023]. In Sahih Bukhari, narrated 'Abdullah bin Ja'far: "I saw the Prophet eating fresh dates with snake cucumbers." [Sahih al-Bukhari 5447]

This practice of combining different food types reflects an understanding of balance in meals, aligning with the modern recommendation to pair carbohydrates with protein or fat to moderate blood sugar levels and enhance satiety.

### BENEFITS

Combining carbohydrates with protein or fat offers several notable advantages for overall health and well-being. These benefits include:

**Improved blood sugar control:** Slow digestion and absorption of carbohydrates leads to a more gradual and sustained release of glucose into the bloodstream.

**Increased satiety:** Protein and fat are more filling than carbohydrates alone.

**Sustained energy levels:** Instead of the quick spike and crash associated

with eating carbs alone, a balanced meal provides a steady source of energy that lasts for hours.

**Better weight management:** Stable blood sugar levels can help control cravings and reduce the likelihood of overeating.

The benefits align seamlessly with the concept of toyyib, which emphasises a holistic approach to food, focussing on nourishment for both physical and spiritual well-being.

### EXAMPLES

Here are some examples of well-balanced meals that exemplify the concept of pairing carbohydrates with protein and fat:

**Apple with peanut butter:** An apple is an excellent source of fibre and natural sugars, but when eaten alone, it can cause a quick rise in blood sugar. Pairing it with peanut butter (which contains healthy fats and a small amount of protein) slows down digestion, helping you stay full longer and providing more sustained energy.

**Whole grain toast with avocado and egg:** Whole grain toast is a good source of complex carbohydrates, but adding avocado (a healthy fat) and an egg (a protein) creates a balanced meal that

provides energy without the crash.

**Greek yoghurt with berries and nuts:** Greek yoghurt is high in protein, and when combined with the fibre in berries and the healthy fats in nuts, it makes for a satisfying snack that keeps blood sugar levels stable.

**Homemade satay, less sweet peanut sauce, and rice cakes:** The meat skewers provide protein and fat, the peanut sauce adds healthy fats and flavour, and the rice cakes offer carbohydrates.

### A SIMPLE HABIT

The idea of not eating your carbohydrates naked but wrapping them in a blanket of protein or fat is a simple yet powerful concept that can significantly impact your health.

As prophetic traditions demonstrate, this small change can lead to better blood sugar control, more sustained energy, and improved satiety.

By making this minor adjustment in your eating habits, in line with the toyyib concept, you can support healthier blood sugar levels, manage your weight more effectively, and enjoy steady energy throughout the day.

So next time you reach for a carbohydrate, pair it with a protein or fat - your body will thank you for it!