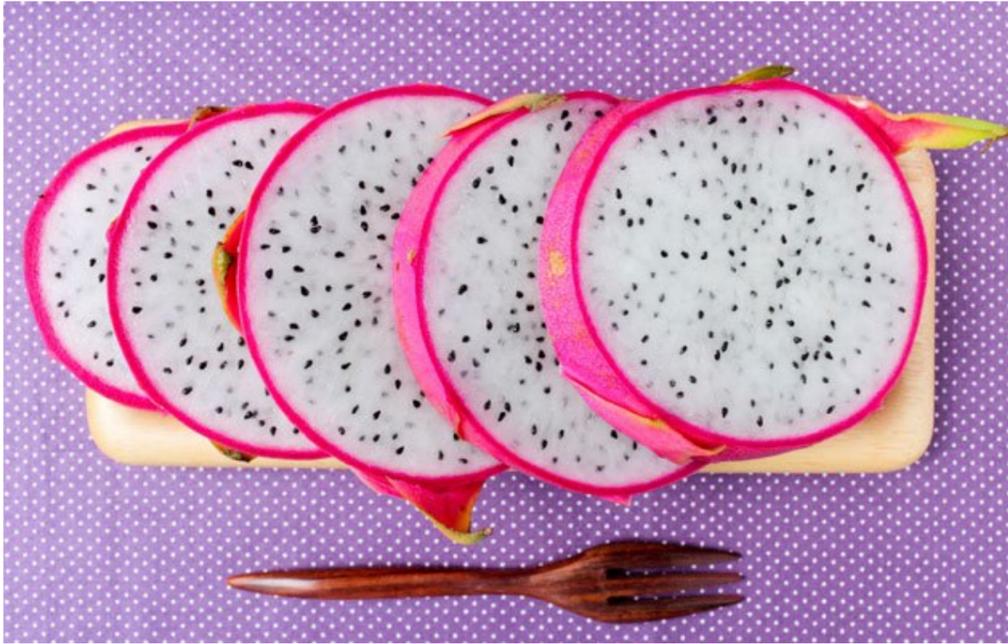


Can fruit rot in the stomach and other surprising facts and myths



Should fruit be eaten before or after meals?

WILL you get diabetes if you indulge your sweet tooth? Can fruit rot in the stomach if eaten after a meal? Is all fish fat good for you?

Dr Shanker Pasupathy, Senior Consultant and Director of the LIFE Centre at Singapore General Hospital (SGH) answers these and other food- and mealtime-related questions, debunking popular nutrition myths and presenting the facts.

Myth 1: Fruit should be eaten on an empty stomach; if it is eaten with other foods it can cause fermentation and rot in the stomach, affecting digestion

Fact: Fruit can be eaten at any time and it can be eaten along with other foods. The body produces digestive enzymes for protein, fat, and carbohydrates which help it digest mixed meals. Besides, since the stomach has a high concentration of hydrochloric acid, bacteria is killed before it is able to reproduce so fermentation cannot take place in the stomach.

Myth 2: You will get diabetes if you indulge your sweet tooth

Fact: If you don't have diabetes, you don't have to worry about treating yourself to your favourite chocolate cake and ice cream now and then. Sugar won't directly cause diabetes but consuming excess "empty" calories from these goodies can lead to obesity, an important risk factor for diabetes.

Myth 3: Sweet cravings are due to a deficiency in your body

Fact: You crave sweet foods, particularly when you are under stress, because these foods trigger the release of mood-enhancing compounds in the brain.

Myth 4: All the fat in fish is good fat

Fact: Only about 30 per cent of the fat in fish is "good" omega-3 fat (exact percentage varies depending on the type of fish). The rest of the fat in fish is a mixture of "bad" fat which raises your cholesterol, and fat which has no special health benefit and just adds to your calorie consumption. Tuna, for instance, has 23 per cent "good" fat and 33 per cent "bad" fat while salmon has 27 per cent "good" fat and 16 per cent "bad" fat.

Myth 5: A glass of wine every day is good for health

Fact: Alcohol disrupts folic acid, a B-vitamin with anti-cancer properties, which puts women who drink every day at a higher risk for breast cancer, compared with women who avoid alcohol altogether. Daily alcohol intake can also be damaging to the liver. However wine -- especially red wine -- contains antioxidant polyphenols which have beneficial effects against atherosclerosis (cardiovascular disease) and cancer. For non-drinkers, polyphenols are also found in dark chocolate, tea, pomegranates and blueberries.