

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

71317 - Why does Islam not tell us to eat less red meat?

the question

I would like to ask in the quran all meat except for pork is halal but doctors say that red meat is full of cholesterol and that it can lead to heart attacks and blockages in the veins so my question is if this food is dangerous to eat then why is it not in the quran that you should try to limit the amount that you eat.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It should be noted first of all that the Qur'aan' is a book of guidance and law-giving, it is not a book of medicine or astronomy, so that some people want it to mention everything that has to do with medicine, astronomy, plants or animals.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“(This is) a Book which We have revealed unto you (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) in order that you might lead mankind out of darkness (of disbelief and polytheism) into light (of belief in the Oneness of Allaah and Islâmic Monotheism) by their Lord’s Leave to the path of the All-Mighty, the Owner of all praise”

[Ibraaheem 14:1]

“And this is a blessed Book (the Qur'aan) which We have sent down, so follow it and fear Allaah (i.e. do not disobey His Orders), that you may receive mercy”

[al-An'aam 6:155]

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With regard to food, the Qur'aan forbids some foods and mentions them in detail, and some others are mentioned in the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

The Qur'aan mentions some general principles that have to do with food, then all of that is explained in detail in the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

Some of the issues that are discussed in detail in the Qur'aan are the following. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم): ‘I find not in that which has been revealed to me anything forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat it, unless it be Maytah (a dead animal) or blood poured forth (by slaughtering or the like), or the flesh of swine (pork); for that surely, is impure or impious (unlawful) meat (of an animal) which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allaah (or has been slaughtered for idols, or on which Allaah’s Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering). But whosoever is forced by necessity without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits; (for him) certainly, your Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”

[al-An'aam 6:145]

“Forbidden to you (for food) are: Al-Maitah (the dead animals — cattle — beast not slaughtered), blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which Allaah’s Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering (that which has been slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allaah, or has been slaughtered for idols) and that which has been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by the goring of horns — and that which has been (partly) eaten by a wild animal — unless you are able to slaughter it (before its death) - and that which is sacrificed (slaughtered) on An-Nusub (stone-altars). (Forbidden) also is to use arrows seeking luck or decision; (all) that is Fisqun (disobedience of Allaah and sin)”

[al-Maa'idah 5:3]

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With regard to some principles, Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and eat and drink but waste not by extravagance, certainly He (Allaah) likes not Al-Musrifoon (those who waste by extravagance)”

[al-A’raaf 7:31]

This prohibition on extravagance in eating and drinking is general in meaning and does not apply to any particular type of food or drink.

This general prohibition on extravagance is more far-reaching than simply forbidding extravagance in eating red meat or anything else, because this general meaning applies to many things.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said in Zaad al-Ma’aad (4/213):

Allaah guided His slaves to consume that which is enough to support the body of food and drink, and told them that it should be to the extent that will benefit the body in terms of quantity and quality. If it goes beyond that then it is extravagance, and both of them pose an obstacle to health and cause sickness; I mean not eating and drinking, or being extravagant in them. Preservation of health is included in these two words. End quote.

Allaah says, describing the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) (interpretation of the meaning):

“he allows them as lawful At-Tayyibaat (i.e. all good and lawful as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons and foods), and prohibits them as unlawful Al-Khabaa’ith (i.e. all evil and unlawful as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons and foods)”

[al-A’raaf 7:157]

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And He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“They ask you (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) what is lawful for them (as food). Say: “Lawful unto you are At-Tayyibaat [all kinds of Halaal (lawful-good) foods which Allaah has made lawful (meat of slaughtered eatable animals, milk products, fats, vegetables and fruits)]”

[al-Maa'idah 5:4]

So everything that is good is permissible, and everything that is bad is haraam.

With regard to the Sunnah, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade the eating of every animal that has fangs and every bird that has talons, and he forbade eating the meat of domesticated donkeys, etc.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) also explained how the believer should be with regard to food and drink, as he said: “The human being does not fill any vessel worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Adam to eat a few mouthfuls, to keep him going. If he must do that (fill his stomach), then let him fill one third with food, one third with drink and one third with air.”

Narrated by al-Tirmidhi and classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi.

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade every harmful thing, whether that is food, drink or anything else. He said: “There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.” Narrated by Ibn Maajah (2340) and classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Irwa' al-Ghaleel (896).

The food may be halaal in principle, but because of extravagance in eating it that leads to harm, it may be haraam. This does not apply only to meat; everything that will cause harm to a person if eaten is haraam, even dates.

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The scholars also stated that it is haraam to eat anything that causes harm.

See: al-Majmoo', 9/39.

If it is proven that a certain food is harmful then it is haraam to eat it, but it should be noted that harmful foods may vary from one person or country to another, so it is not permissible to say that it is haraam in general terms, rather it is haraam only for the one who will be harmed by it, if he eats the amount that will harm him.