

anaemia during pregnancy and the development of the baby. Red blood cells play a role in keeping cells alive by carrying oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood. Due to dates' high iron levels, a human being can meet his or her iron requirements by eating just 15 dates a day and will thus be protected from disorders arising from iron deficiency.

\* The calcium and phosphate in dates are important elements for skeletal growth and balancing the body's bone structure. The high levels of phosphorus and calcium in dates protect the body against bone weakness and help reduce such disorders.

\* Scientists also emphasise the way in which dates reduce stress and tension. Research by Berkeley University experts has revealed that dates contain high levels of vitamin B6, which strengthens the nerves, and magnesium, which is very important for the kidneys. A person can meet his magnesium requirement by eating just 2-3 grains of date a day.

\* The vitamin B1 in dates facilitates the health of the nervous system, assists the transformation of the carbohydrates in the body into energy and the use of protein and fats to meet the body's needs. Vitamin B2 assists in the burning of protein, carbohydrates and fats for the provision of bodily energy and cell renewal.

\* The body's vitamin A requirement rises during pregnancy. Thanks to the vitamin A it contains, the date improves vision and bodily resistance and strengthens the teeth and bones. Dates are also especially rich in beta-carotene. Beta-carotene helps prevent cancer by controlling molecules that attack the cells.

In addition, unlike dates, other fruits are generally lacking in protein. Thanks to this feature, dates enable the body to protect itself against illness and infection, to renew cells and ensure fluid balance. Meat is also a useful foodstuff but maybe not as much as the date, which is a fresh fruit, especially at such a time. Indeed, excessive consumption of meat during pregnancy can actually lead to toxicity in the body. It is much better for pregnant women to choose fruit and vegetables, which are light and easily digested.

All these facts about dates reveal Allah's infinite knowledge and compassion for human beings. As we have seen, the benefits of the date,

especially during pregnancy and only recently established by modern medical science, were indicated in the Quran many years ago.

**The date fruit is an essential part of Ramadan and is historically linked to the Islamic culture. Muslims around the world follow the Sunnah of Muhammad (P) by breaking their fast with a date. It's a centuries old tradition honoured by millions to take a bite of date at sundown. Today, it is often used to end the daily fast during Ramadan, Health news reported.**

**Muslims generally would love to break their fast by eating dates. Prophet Muhammad (P) said, "If anyone of you is fasting, let him break his fast with dates. In case he does not have them, then with water. Verily water is a purifier." Before offering Maghrib prayers, the Prophet (P) used to break his fast by eating some dates. If ripe dates were not available, he substituted them with some dried grapes. When they too were not available, he had a few sips of water.**

**Later, science proved that dates are an essential part of a healthy diet, as they contain sugar, fat and proteins as well as important vitamins and are also rich in natural fibres.**

**Modern medicine has shown that dates are effective in preventing abdominal cancer. They also surpass other fruits in the sheer variety of their constituents that include oil, calcium, sulphur, iron, potassium, phosphorous, manganese, copper and magnesium.**

**In other words, one date satisfies the minimum requirements of a balanced and healthy diet. When the level of trace elements falls in the body, the health of blood vessels is affected, leading to an increased heart rate and a consequent inability to perform its functions with normal efficiency.**

**As dates are also rich in calcium, they help in strengthening the bones. When the calcium content in the body decreases, children are affected with rickets and the bones of adults become brittle and weak. Dates are also important in keeping up the health of eyes. It is quite effective in guarding against night-blindness. Dates are nature's answer to our sweet tooth. They provide food energy in the form of invert sugars, important for persons who cannot tolerate sucrose.**



One of the many physical benefits of breaking the fast with dates is that our body benefits from the date's high level of natural sugars. Sugars travel most quickly to the liver, where they are converted into energy more quickly than any other nutrient. Muslims have an immediate need for this energy when they break their fast, for they need energy to perform their sunset prayers. Ironically, one also needs this energy to consume the iftar meal. When a person eats, the body uses energy to digest the food. Eating large quantities of food immediately after fasting is not healthy for the body, which is in a weakened condition. Eating a date first helps the body start its digestive process and gives it the energy to deal with the secondary, more complex foods, eaten during iftar.

In a number of Quranic verses, the humble date is honoured as one of the blessings of Paradise. (55:68) When this fruit is examined, it can be seen to have many important features. One of the oldest known species of plant, the date is today a food of preference not only for its delicious taste but also for its nutritious properties. There are more than 300 types of dates in Saudi Arabia with each having its own different taste and texture. New benefits imparted by the date are being discovered every day and has come to be used as a medicine as well as a food. These features of the date are noted in Surah Maryam (19:23-26): **The pains of labour drove her to the trunk of a date-palm. Maryam said, "O if only I had died before this time and was something discarded and forgotten!" A voice called out to her from under her, "Do not grieve! Your Lord has placed a small stream at your feet. Shake the trunk of the palm towards you and fresh, ripe dates will drop down onto you. Eat and drink and delight your eyes..."**

There is considerable wisdom in the way that Allah recommends Maryam to eat this fruit. The date is an excellent choice of food for pregnant women and for those who have just given birth. This is a widely accepted scientific fact. Maryam was inspired to understand this point, in order to make her own labour easier. The date has one of the highest sugar levels, 60-65%, of all fruits. Doctors recommend that pregnant women be given foods containing fruit sugar on the day they give birth. The aim behind this is to energise and revitalise the mother's weakened body and at the same time to stimulate the milk hormones and increase the levels of mother's milk essential to the new-born baby.

In addition, loss of blood during birth leads to a fall in body sugar levels. Dates are important from the point of view of enabling sugar to enter the body and prevent blood pressure from dropping. Their high calorific value strengthens people weakened by illness or suffering from extreme fatigue.

These facts reveal the wisdom in the way

that Allah recommended Maryam to eat dates, designed to energise and invigorate the woman and ensure the emergence of milk, the only food for a baby. For example, the date contains more than ten elements of vital importance if the body is to remain healthy and energetic. Modern-day scientists state that human beings can actually live for years on nothing more than dates and water. V. H. W. Dowson, a recognised expert in this field, says that one grain of date and a glass of milk are enough to meet all of a person's daily nutritional requirements.

The substance oxytocin, which is present in the date, is used in modern medicine to facilitate birth. In fact, oxytocin means "rapid birth." It is also known to increase levels of mother's milk after birth.

Oxytocin is actually a hormone released by the pituitary gland which stimulates contractions of the womb during childbirth. All the pre-birth preparations in the body take place thanks to this hormone. The effects of the hormone can be seen in the muscles that form the mother's womb and in cells in the muscular structure that enables the secretion of mother's milk. The effective contraction of the womb is essential if birth is to take place. Oxytocin enables the muscles that comprise the womb to contract in a very powerful manner. Moreover, oxytocin also initiates the secretion of mother's milk. This feature of the date alone-the way it contains oxytocin is important evidence that the Quran is the revelation of Allah. The medical identification of the benefits of the date only became possible in recent times. Yet it was set out fourteen centuries ago in the Quran that Allah revealed to Maryam that she should eat dates.

Dates also contain a form of sugar that gives the body high levels of mobility and heat energy and which can be easily broken down in the body. Furthermore, this sugar is not glucose, which rapidly raises the level of blood sugar but the fruit sugar fructose. A rapid rise in blood sugar levels in diabetics in particular has a damaging effect on a great many organs and systems, especially the eyes, kidneys, heart and circulatory system and nervous system. High blood sugar is one of the main causes of disorders as serious as loss of sight, heart attacks and kidney insufficiency.

Dates contain a great many vitamins and

minerals. They are very rich in fibre, fat and proteins. They also contain sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron, sulphur, phosphorus and chlorine, as well as vitamins A, beta-carotene, B1, B2, B3 and B6. Some of the benefits of the vitamins and minerals in dates to the normal human body and especially during pregnancy can be summarised as follows:

\* The nutritional value of dates stems from the appropriate mineral balance within them. The date also contains folic acid, a B vitamin of great importance to pregnant women. Folic acid (B9) is a vitamin which serves important functions in the construction of new blood cells and of amino acids, the body's building blocks, and in cell renewal. The need for folic acid thus rises significantly during pregnancy and the daily requirement doubles. When folic acid levels are insufficient, red blood cells that are larger than normal but with lower functionality emerge, along with the symptoms of anaemia, appear. Folic acid plays a particularly important role in cell division and in the formation of the genetic structure of the cell and is the only substance daily requirements of which double during pregnancy. The date is exceedingly rich in folic acid.

\* On the other hand, the long-term nausea and physical reactions that appear during pregnancy do so because of a lack of potassium. Levels therefore need to be reinforced. In the same way that the large quantities of potassium in dates are of great importance in this regard, they are also important in regulating the water balance in the body. Moreover, by helping oxygen to reach the brain potassium enables one to think clearly. In addition, it provides the appropriate alkaloidal features for body fluids and stimulates the kidneys to expel toxic bodily wastes. It helps bring down high blood pressure and the formation of healthy skin.

\* The iron contained in dates controls the synthesis of haemoglobin in the red blood cells and ensures an appropriate level of red cells in the blood. This is of vital importance in preventing

Break your Fast with... **Dates**

If a person has some dates in his house then he is **not** poor.

Prophet Muhammad (p)