

HOW EATING *HALAL* AND *TOYYIB* CONTRIBUTES TO A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

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ABSTRACT: Food is not just to satisfy one's desires, but it is a way of maintaining one's health and constantly striving to worship *Allah*. While the concept of eating as medicine is not new, Islam had already given guidelines on eating food through the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* from the Prophet and the companions. In Islam, the concept of eating is based on *halal* and *toyyib*, which describes eating permissible and wholesome food according to Islamic principles. However, Muslims nowadays ignore this concept, which is taking tolls on their daily lives, making them mentally and physically unhealthy. Islam emphasises food intake because of the significant impact it may have on physical and mental well-being and the soul of an individual. The types of diet in line with Islamic teaching are also described from the practice of the Prophets. The information is collected using Scopus and Google Scholar databases in addition to the primary two sources: the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. The reported evidence from *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* were from trusted sources, and references are provided. The contribution of this article is to set guidelines to achieve a balanced lifestyle by consuming *halal* and *toyyib*, deriving that from prophetic practices.

KEYWORDS: *Halal food; Lifestyle; Healthy; Balanced; Toyyib*

1. WHY DO WE EAT?

According to a clinical perspective on human obesity, we are “eating ourselves to death”. According to this viewpoint, a combination of genes, nutrition, and lifestyle factors encourage overeating and poor energy expenditure, resulting in obesity and its numerous adverse health effects, (Schneider et al., 2013). Multiple factors influence human eating habits. Without a doubt, hunger and other physiological aspects influence our eating habits. Adaptive eating, or ‘intuitive eating’, is primarily based on physiological hunger and satiety cues rather than situational and emotional cues. On the other hand, food has an incentive value beyond satiation because eating pleasure is an essential motivator for eating, and food choice is essential. External food signals such as the fragrance or sight of food or positive or negative emotional states can also prompt eating and food choice, (Renner et al., 2012).

Food is a source of energy and nutrients, yet obtaining it necessitates energy expenditure. With increased extra-somatic energy inputs, the scale of catching, collecting, and creating food

has been substantially enlarged, and methods have been intensified in post-hunter-gatherer communities. Energy, food, and health linkages have become increasingly complicated and multidimensional in recent years, posing significant policy problems at national and international levels, (McMichael et al., 2007).

2. ISLAM CONCEPT TOWARDS EATING

Islam is far more than a religion; it is a complete and comprehensive way of life that drives humans to a better lifestyle. All elements of human life are combined, just as all the systems in the human body function together to form a complete human being. This been said, there are no aspects that were left out in Islam. One of the things that Islam emphasises is the consumption of food. The necessity to eat and consume food is a human's most basic daily requirement, which supports him from birth to death, and even the Prophets and divine authorities have no exception. Food is not just to satisfy one's desires, but it is a way of maintaining one's health and constantly striving to worship *Allah*. In Islam, the concept of eating is based on *halal* and *toyyib*, which describes eating permissible and wholesome food according to Islamic principles and allowing for consumption as safe and not harmful. In Islam, all actions performed in the daily course of life can be raised to worship simply by remembering to praise *Allah* and seek *His* pleasure. Food plays a significant part in our daily lives, and the rewards accumulated from the act of eating can be innumerable and of more substance than a full belly or bulging waistline. Food is the fundamental source in our daily life; it contains essential nutrients, such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, and vitamins, to provide energy for living and growing, (Lim, 2018).

Islam has provided numerous guidelines on food and eating through the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* from the Prophet and the companions. *Allah* did not set things in motion and then abandon us to our path when *He* created the world; instead, *He* sent us guidance. This guidance comes in the form of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Within these two sources of guidance, we will find the rules and regulations and the rights and responsibilities that allow us to deal with any situation we may find ourselves in. Islam is one of the religions that significantly focuses on what we eat. Many verses in the *Qur'an* guide proper diet and the connection of physical and spiritual well-being. Two verses on eating are from *Al-Baqarah*, which reinforce us to consume from religiously lawful and pure earth.

"O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy."

(*Al-Baqarah*: verse 168)

"O you who have Faith! Eat of the good things We have provided you with, and be grateful to Allah, if Him it is you worship."

(*Al-Baqarah*: verse 172)

Many verses in the *Qur'an*, for example, in *Taha*, *An-Nahl*, and *Al-A'raaf*, mention the foods God has provided for us to nurture and maintain our bodies. It is not an exhaustive list of dietary requirements but rather a general concept of the types of food that keep the body healthy and keep illness away. Besides that, healthy eating satisfies hunger and affects how well we worship. Thus, in Islam, it is vital to maintain the body's health for the soul and spirit to remain healthy, assisting the believer in spiritual and material achievement. According to *Allah's* commands, implementing a suitable diet is an important component of living life. Choosing nutritious foods and avoiding unhealthy foods are critical to maintaining excellent health.

3. HOW DOES EATING *HALAL* AND *TOYYIB* CONTRIBUTE TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

At the beginning of every year, individuals who make new resolutions and set up goals to be achieved are limitless. However, all the efforts they made would usually be enervated. The reason is that many tend to set unrealistic goals and start their healthy journey by forbidding themselves from everything they like. Indeed, however, they should achieve balanced and healthy eating by following the simple rules of *halal* and *toyyib* because everything was elaborated more than 1400 years ago.

There are five food groups: fruit and vegetables, protein, dairy, starchy food, and fat, and an individual must ensure consuming all of them for a healthy lifestyle. The Ministry of Health (MOH) Malaysia has often maintained that the prevention of chronic diseases relies upon consuming a moderate and balanced diet. Furthermore, due to the social changes in the lifestyle and work schedule for the mothers, many families tend to eat out or order their food, particularly during office hours. Furthermore, it is undeniable that lifestyle practices such as poor diet, sedentary living, smoking, and stress play significant roles in the onset and progression of chronic diseases, such as heart diseases, hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Moreover, it is not surprising that the well-being of a community depends on the quality of life led by each individual and the level of awareness among them.

Islam is a religion that embraces all facets of life. Islam emphasises the importance of maintaining one's health and well-being as a way of life. To obtain optimal health, one must consider various factors, including food consumption, which directly impacts one's emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Aside from that, Muslims are advised to pay special attention to their meals to keep a pure heart and sound intellect and nurture an aspirant spirit and a clean, healthy body. Muslims are allowed to eat *halal* food, which is defined as permissible. Furthermore, Muslims are encouraged to eat good (*toyyib*) food, covering safety aspects, (Rani et al., 2016). As the most outstanding example among all human beings, our Prophet set many guidelines for Muslims to follow to achieve and preserve a healthy lifestyle, whether physical, emotional, or mental well-being. Many foods have been appraised in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* and have been confirmed to have several benefits, (Hashman, 2009).

4. INTERMITTENT FASTING

Intermittent fasting has existed for a long time and comes in various forms. It is a famous health and fitness trend, with individuals using it to reduce weight, improve their overall health, and simplify their lives since many studies demonstrate it can benefit the body and brain. It is an eating pattern that alternates between periods of fasting and eating. It does not focus on which foods you should eat but when you should eat them. Daily 16-hour fasts or fasting for 24 hours twice a week are two standard intermittent fasting regimens, (Mattson et al., 2017a). Fasting is one of the pillars of Islam in the form of refraining or abstaining from eating, drinking, and anything that cancels it from sunrise to sunset, (Bebasari et al., 2021). In Islam, fasting is obligatory worship executed, particularly in *Ramadan*, but there is also complementary worship, which is *Sunnah*, (Bebasari et al., 2021). Prophet frequently fast on Monday and Thursday, and when asked why the answer is as below.

Abu Huraira reported:

The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, “The deeds are presented on Monday and Thursday. Thus, I love for my deeds to be presented while I am fasting”. Source: Sunan At-Tirmidhi 747

Prophet also fast three days a month, which makes up to one-third of the month.

Abu Dharr reported:

The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, “O Abu Dharr, if you are going to fast three days of the month, then fast on the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth days”. Source: Sunan At-Tirmidhi 761

Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al-As also narrated:

“The Prophet said to me: I have been informed that you pray all the nights and observe fast all the days; is this true?’ I replied: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘If you do so, your eyes will be weak, and you will get bored. So fast three days a month, for this will be the fasting of a whole year. (Or equal to the fasting of a whole year).’ I said: ‘I find myself able to fast more.’ He said: ‘Then fast like the fasting of (the Prophet) David who used to fast on alternate days and would not flee on facing the enemy’”. Source: Sahih Bukhari 360

Fasting taught in Islam is in the form of alternate-day fasting because there is a period of being allowed to eat and a period of not eating at all, (Mohamed et al., 2018). Fasting, which is done as an act of worship, positively affects physical and psychological health. Fasting can improve mental health and reduce depression while bringing out positive values such as honesty, patience, generosity, and discipline. Many advantages are associated with fasting, such as lowering blood pressure, reduced chances of developing cancer, increased fat burning, an increased sense of overall well-being, (Cross, Sarah J. Linker, Kay E. Leslie, 2016). The most exciting aspect of fasting is that studies have shown that the quality of food we eat and the timings we select to eat significantly impact our overall physical and mental well-being. When we eat intentionally and mindfully, focusing on when and what we eat, we allow our bodies to concentrate less on digestion and concentrate more on self-healing from other diseases. Both regular fasting and intermittent fasting involve decreasing the total amount of food intake. They are also a form of training in appetite control. They also promote blood sugar control by reducing insulin resistance. Lastly, it could aid weight loss by limiting calorie intake and boosting metabolism through ketosis. Numerous physiological health markers are improved in laboratory mice and rats regulated on IF diets involving alternate day fasting and feeding at limited time intervals. Among these outcomes of IF are low levels of insulin and leptin, reduction of body fat; elevated ketosis; lower resting heart rate, and higher heart rate variability. It also contributed to lower inflammation, higher tolerance of the heart and brain to stress, and endurance to diabetes. The IF can slow down the onset and progress of neuronal dysfunction and degeneration in animal models of Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and Huntington’s diseases, (Mattson et al., 2017b).

5. TYPES OF DIET

5.1 Balanced Diet

A balanced diet that meets the recommended caloric intake is essential for overall body health (Lim, 2018). The importance of health and well-being has been highlighted in the Islamic religion, and Muslims have acknowledged the benefit of living a good and healthy life based on Islamic guidelines. In Islamic culture, obtaining, consuming, and choosing food and avoiding unclean and prohibited foods like blood, dead animals, and pork are crucial. However, eating vegetables and fruits, poultry and fish, cooked food, brief nutrition are emphasised. Some foods are mentioned in the Qur'an that is worth noting.

Among them are grapes, which are mentioned eleven times in the *Qur'an* in the different *surah*. Grapes appear in *Al-Baqarah* verse 266, *Al-An'aam* verse 99, *Ar-Ra'd* verse 4, *An-Nahl* verse 11 and 67, *Al-Israa* verse 91, *Al-Kahf* verse 32, *Al-Muminoon* verse 19, *Yaseen* verse 34, *An-Naba* verse 32, and *Abasa* verse 28. Grapes are commonly consumed to relieve constipation, but they have many other health benefits. Grapes are full of vitamins and nutrients and high in antioxidants which can help curb diseases such as Alzheimer's and certain cancers.

"And from the fruits of date palms and grapes, you obtain (date and grape juice) and a goodly provision..." An-Nahl: verse 67

Another example is quails, which are mentioned in the *Qur'an* three times. They are mentioned in *Taha*. Quails are also mentioned in *Al-Baqarah* and *Al-Araf*. Quail meat contains protein, phosphor, calcium, iron, and zinc. It also contains several vitamins, vitamin D, vitamin A, and vitamin K, all of which are great for your body.

"...and We sent down to you Al-Manna and quails," Taha: verse 80

Taking the most excellent possible care of one's own body is a fundamental duty of Islam. One of the most important ways to do this is to ensure that the food they consume is of the best possible quality. Healthy ingredients are crucial in most body functions, such as maintaining a healthy weight, immune system, brain, and metabolic functions. The Prophet never insisted on having a specific type of food. He ate whatever he was provided as long as it was *halal* food. Our Prophet loved to eat healthy food: dates, honey, milk, and olives. The Prophet chose the most beneficial food available because of his connection to the source of Divine wisdom and awareness of the attributes and effects of a variety of foods. In addition, he also followed medical principles concerning the portion of food he ate.

Honey contains antibacterial and antifungal qualities that could destroy bacteria and fungi, avoiding infection and aiding wound healing. Honey is also rich in antioxidants and can slow down the ageing process and prevent heart disease while reducing cancer risk. Milk is packed with vitamins and minerals, such as potassium, vitamin B12, calcium, vitamin D, vitamin A, magnesium, vitamin B1, and zinc. It contains hundreds of conjugated linoleic acids and omega 3, which are linked to preventing heart disease and can decrease the risk of diabetes.

Narrated *Abu Said Al-Khudri*:

A man came to the Prophet and said, "My brother has some abdominal trouble." The Prophet said to him, "Let him drink honey." The man came for the second time, and the Prophet said to him, "Let him drink honey." He came for the third time, and the Prophet said, "Let him drink honey." He returned and said, "I have done that The

Prophet then said, "Allah has said the truth, but your brother's abdomen has told a lie. Let him drink honey." So, he made him drink honey, and he was cured. Source: Sahih Bukhari 5684

Abdullah ibn Ja'far reported:

I saw the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, eating fresh dates with cucumbers. Source: Sahih Muslim 2043

For a balanced diet, an individual needs to consume the five groups of food: grains, proteins, fats, fruits and vegetables, and dairy (Figure 1).



Fig. 1: The five groups of food for a balanced diet.

Two of the most contentious issues in sports nutrition today are meal frequency and nutritional distribution. Is there a one-size-fits-all nutritional formula for enhancing physiques and performance? These questions emerge frequently, yet scientists have differing viewpoints on the best strategy. One thing is sure: there are a variety of strategies available, including very low meal frequency (1-2 meals), or 3 meals per day, and high meal frequency (6+ meals), (Lowery, 2014). The balanced diet as reported by Harvard University should be as follows:

- a) Half of the plate (50%) should include vegetables and fruits: an individual should aim for variety and colour, and keep in mind that, for instance, potatoes do not count as vegetables on the healthy eating plate due to their blood sugar impact.
- b) Quarter (25%) of the plate should be made up of whole grains; whole and intact grains, such as whole wheat, barley, wheat berries, quinoa, oats, brown rice, and dishes produced with them, such as whole-wheat pasta, have a gentler effect on blood sugar and insulin than refined grains such as white bread and white rice.
- c) A quarter of the plate should be devoted to protein. Fish, chicken, beans, and nuts are all healthful, adaptable protein choices that go well with vegetables on a plate and may be combined into salads. The intake of red meat and steer clear of processed meats like sausage should be limited

- d) Plant oils are good if used in moderation; partly, hydrogenated oils should be avoided, as they contain trans fatty acids, (Belin et al., 2011).

A healthy eating plate is shown in Figure 2.

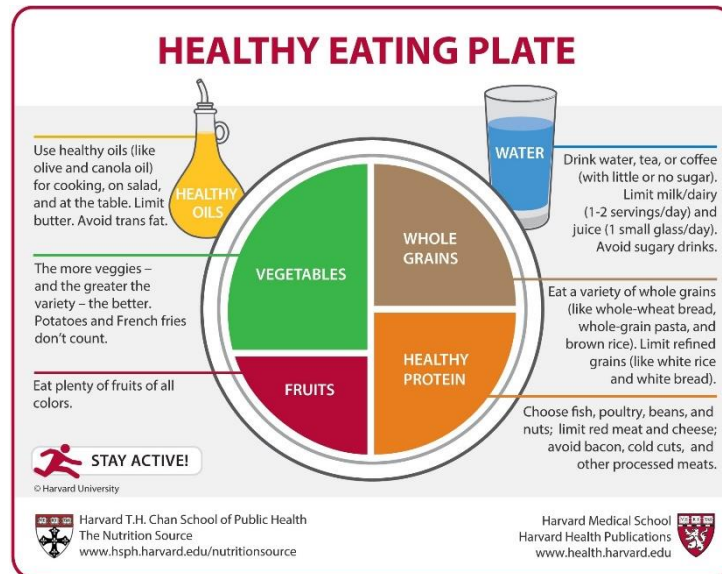


Fig. 2: Healthy eating Plate.

Source: Harvard Medical School, www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource

5.2 Intuitive Eating

The concept of adaptable, healthy eating behaviour is most commonly looked at in terms of intuitive eating, which refers to a group of eating behaviours characterised by a reliance on internal hunger and satiety cues. Individuals who eat instinctively are aware of and trust their bodies' physiological cues, give themselves unconditional permission to eat, are unconcerned about food and dieting, and choose meals to support or enhance their body's functioning. Studies have demonstrated that intuitive eating is related to lower body mass index (BMI) and decreased gestational weight gain, (Paterson et al., 2019). Furthermore, intuitive eating is linked to higher levels of positive psychological well-being (e.g., optimism, life satisfaction, and positive body image), as well as healthy eating behaviours (e.g., lower binge eating and higher vegetable and fruit intake), (Ruzanska & Warschburger, 2020). Hence, intuitive eating has become an essential component of therapy to improve body image and reduce disordered eating symptoms, which is not surprising. According to research, women who employ satiety cues to quit eating are less likely to engage in persistent dieting and binge eating, (Koller et al., 2020).

This concept seems directly linked to the prophetic concept of one-third when one should not eat until ultimately full.

5.3 Prophetic Concept One-Third of the Vessel

As Muslims, it is *Sunnah* for us to incorporate the Prophet's eating practices into our daily lives; while this may require a complete lifestyle shift for some, our reward may be enhanced merely by attempting to eat a more balanced diet. It is worth noting that the Prophet cautioned Muslims against overeating.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The son of Adam 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". Source: Sunan At-Tirmidhi 2380

The illustration is shown in Figure 3.



Fig. 3: The concept of 1/3 of the vessel for mindful eating.

The Prophet's wisdom in giving the advice has been proven medically and scientifically that overindulgence in eating can bring forth illness and diseases. The *Qur'an* had clearly stated in *Al-A'raaf* to not be excessive in eating.

"And eat and drink but waste not by extravagance; certainly He (Allah) likes not Al-Musrifûn (those who waste by extravagance)". Al-A'raaf: verse 31

The danger of overeating is now recognised by medical science. Overeating, especially unhealthy foods, can impact your body in many ways, leading to serious health issues mentally and physically, (Adams et al., 2019). For example, overeating has been linked to memory loss and mental impairment in people who consume large quantities of high-calorie foods. Other than that, stress hormone 'norepinephrine' could be released when overeating, heightened blood pressure, and heart rate, (Yau & Potenza, 2013). Thousand years ago, Prophet already emphasised the ideal criteria for eating. Prophetic narrations have stressed that overeating causes diseases, hardheartedness, sluggishness in worship and prayer, and body illness.

'Urwah reported:

Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, "Verily, the first trial to occur in this nation after the passing of its Prophet, peace, and blessings be upon him, was people eating to their fill. For when people fill their stomachs, their bodies are fattened, their hearts are hardened, and their desires are uncontrollable." Source: al-Juli-Ibn Abi Dunya 22

In conclusion, the necessity of healthy eating and a well-balanced diet can be fully grasped from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet. From the beginning, Islam has emphasised the

need for a well-balanced or nutritious diet. Foods mentioned in *Qur'an* are an excellent source of nutrition and are considered a key to a good healthy life. As Muslims, we should practice the aspects mentioned above of a well-balanced diet while also focusing on eating manners.

5.4 The Consumption of *Halal* and *Toyyib*

People of many faiths, races, genders, and other characteristics value fitness. Our bodies are an Amanah (entrusted to us) on loan to us for the duration of our lives, and like everything else we love and appreciate in this world, they will be taken away from us one day. Therefore, we are commanded to consume only *halal* and *toyyib* food. Surprisingly, when the notion of *halal* is being used concerning food, the concept of *toyyib* is discussed as well. As a result, when *halal* food is presented, the combined word "*Halalan Toyyiban*" must be used. The concept of "you are what you eat" is supported by *Qur'an*:

"O you Messengers! Eat of the clean and pure (*toyyib*) and act righteously" (*Al-Mu'minun*: 51).

The antonym of *toyyib* is '*Khabith*', which refers to something dirty, harmful, or disgusting "makes lawful to them the pure things and makes unlawful to them impure things" (*Al'rāf*: 157). *Halal* and *toyyib* have been discussed extensively in a variety of sources. The majority believe *toyyib* has anything to do with food safety, (Alzeer et al., 2018). Food is the fundamental source in our daily life; it contains essential nutrients, such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, and vitamins, to provide energy for living and growing. The food industry is offering us different choices with variable food quality. Importantly, food can be a potential vehicle for disease transmission; thus, food quality plays a significant role in human health. Food safety is essential in sustaining life and maintaining public health. Primarily, the safe handling, preparation, and storage of food help prevent illness and injury, (Chaves et al., 2017). *Toyyib* means "clean" and "pure" in Arabic; hence, the notion of *toyyib* in the context of food refers to a process that allows food to accomplish both goals: maximum cleanliness (clean) and minimum contamination (pure) while avoiding potentially poisonous, *Najis* (ritually unclean) and *Khabith* (impure) elements. As a result, how *halal* a subject is treated will determine if *halal* is *toyyib* or not. Chicken is *halal* as a topic, but how it is handled, managed, fed, and slaughtered determines whether it is *Halalan Toyyiban*, (Alzeer et al., 2018). From our point of view, *toyyib* includes nutritious and healthy, which means diet-friendly. Therefore, we can present this concept in Figure 4.

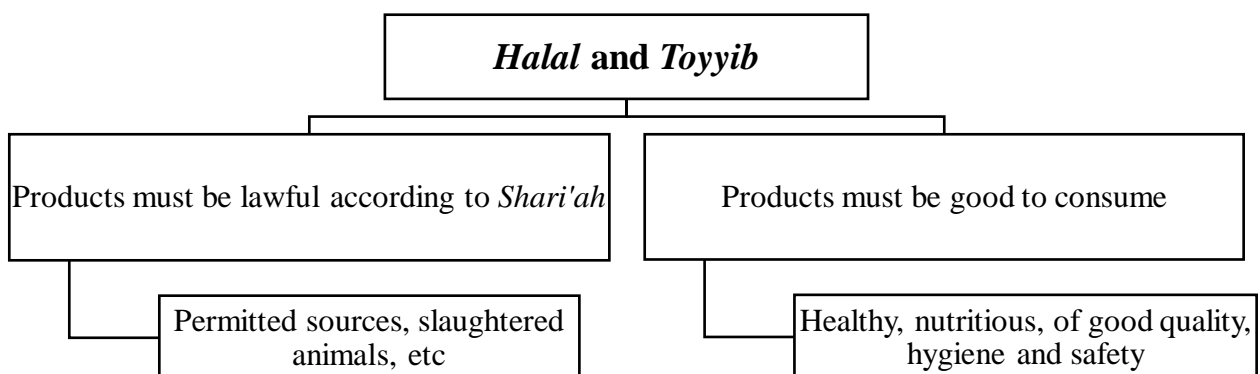


Fig. 4: The broad concept of *Halal* and *Toyyib*.

From the above concept, we can conclude that a healthy and notorious meal is in line with the classical definitions by a few researchers:

- a) Something good, appealing and considered beneficial to one's health by a person of sound mind. This means that the food itself appeals to the sane person and is known to be healthy.
- b) Tasty, delectable, nutritious, and free of health risks.
- c) It is free of health risks, delightful, and nourishing.
- d) Something safe to eat from a medical standpoint.

In practice, this means that foods that harm humans' health, such as high sugar content, high saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, and high sodium, are not classified as *toyyib* even though they are *halal*. In addition, a fundamental aspect of *toyyib* is the cleanliness and hygiene of the surroundings. Therefore, assuring *toyyib* in the *halal* food sector includes:

- a) maintaining a sanitary working environment
- b) safeguarding the personal safety of food handlers
- c) ensuring that food handlers have and maintain adequate personal hygiene
- d) providing enough and clean restroom and handwashing facilities
- e) ensuring that food handlers utilise suitable bathroom and handwashing practices
- f) guaranteeing proper and clean work clothes
- g) maintaining product packaging integrity by keeping any jars containing food ingredients closed during manufacture

The Malaysian *Halal-Toyyiban* assurance pipeline standards define the *toyyib* concept as follows: “Complements and perfects the essence (spirit) of the basic standard or minimum threshold (*halal*), i.e. on hygiene, safety, sanitation, cleanliness, nutrition, risk exposure, environmental, social and other related aspects following situational or application needs; wholesomeness”, (Fazal Ur Raheema & Neio Demircib, 2018). In summary, food should benefit your body and enable you to perform your daily activities to be *halal* and *toyyib*.

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