Digestion Time for Meaty-meal vs Vegetable meal

Digestion is the process that our bodies employ to help break down the chunky food we consume into simpler nutrients that can easily get absorbed into the bloodstream. The process starts in the mouth where mechanical and chemical breakdown happens. Food proceeds to the stomach then to the small intestine and finally large intestine before exiting the body as stool.

Generally, a typical transit time for a healthy individual is estimated to take up to 72 hours in total(Mayo,2019). However, the exact alimentary transit duration is determined by the type and macronutrient composition of the food taken. Other factors like an individuals physical activity, gender and gut health also play a role in determining transit time(Colstate.edu)

When all other factors are held constant: meaty meals take longer to digest than vegetable based meals.

As matter of fact, meat usually has high protein and fat content. Protein digestion starts down in the stomach at slow rate taking 3 to 4 hours, (KOS,2023). The second major component that make up meat is fat, which takes the longest time to be digested stretching up to 3 days due to the complex nature of lipids.(Livestrong,2019). This two components of meat that have long digestion periods contribute greatly to the lengthy time that a meaty meal takes in your gut.

On the contrary, a meal packed with vegetables will get digested faster because of high carbohydrates and fibre content(Livestrong 2019 ). Starch breakdown begins in the mouth where enzyme amylase is present in saliva. Complete digestion happens in the stomach making carbohydrates the fastest digestible food type. Further evidence indicate that gut microbes have a higher preference for carbohydrates as compared to proteins and fat thus accelerating the breakdown process altogether. Fibre which is abundant in fruits and vegetables, enhances digestion and promotes faster intestinal movement(UCSF,2023).

Next time you take a meaty meal expect it to stick around longer than a vegetable based meal because the protein and fat which are predominant in meat take longer to digest. The opposite will however be the case for a vegetable meal which has more of carbohydrates, fibre with less proteins and fat.

Reference

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