

THE mix of rich food, extra stress and endless holiday gatherings can do a number on the digestive system.

Between charcuterie boards, champagne toasts and once-a-year desserts, it's no wonder bloating is one of the most common holiday complaints.

And nothing kills holiday cheer faster than feeling uncomfortably full and sluggish.

The good news is that bloating can be kept under control without missing out on all those festive holiday foods.

The key is a little strategy and making some simple, science-backed tweaks.

Here are smart ways to maintain a happy gut and avoid that dreaded holiday bloat this year:

> **Front-load each day with protein and fibre**

Starting with a high-protein, high-fibre breakfast steadies blood sugar and curbs cravings later.

It also helps boost satiety, making it easier to pass up office goodies or that second slice of pie.

> **Watch portion sizes**

Oversized holiday meals take much longer to digest, potentially leading to bloating.

Instead of piling a plate sky high, savour smaller servings and save some favourites for the next day.

> **Slow down at the table**

Taking at least 30 minutes to finish a meal helps prevent excess air from sneaking into your stomach.

Chewing gum, sipping from straws or rushing through a plate can all increase swallowed air



Enjoy the feast, skip the bloating

Here are some tips on how to avoid that overly full, sluggish feeling after too much holiday feasting.

and the bloating that comes with it.

> **Boost dietary fibre intake**

Fibre helps move food through the digestive system at the right pace to keep things regular.

Holiday foods that are also good sources of dietary fibre

include apples, pears, cranberries, sweet potatoes, brussels sprouts, wild rice, carrots, walnuts and pecans.

> **Give the body's digestive enzymes extra support**

Digestive enzymes are the behind-the-scenes heroes that

help break down food into nutrients the body can actually use.

But if the body's digestive enzymes are overwhelmed by a large holiday meal, undigested food may just sit in the gut.

That food becomes fuel for gas-producing bacteria, leading to bloating, pressure and discomfort.

Take some probiotics, which are good gut bacteria, that will help keep your gastrointestinal tract healthy, and thus, support

Regret overly-stuffing yourself during this period of festive feasting? There are a few simple strategies you can employ to avoid the 'holiday bloat', while still enjoying seasonal favourites. (This image is human-created, AI-aided)

your body's digestive enzymes.

> **Balance the bubbly**

Champagne and other carbonated drinks add gas to the gastrointestinal tract, which may intensify bloating.

Balance a holiday toast with water.

Hydration supports digestion.

Bonus: Water also helps offset salt- and carb-heavy meals.

> **Walk it off**

A short walk after meals helps the body digest food more efficiently, while also helping to reduce bloating and lower stress.

Evening strolls can also support better sleep and help prevent holiday weight creep.

> **Post-holiday TLC can help restore gut balance**

Strict liquid diets aren't always necessary for a great detox.

Just lean in more on the fruits and vegetables in your post-holiday diet.

Some gentle plant-based ingredients help flush toxins, promote regularity, and support metabolism (energy) and weight management.

Many people experience that "never eating again" moment after a big holiday meal.

But every plate is a fresh start.

With a few mindful swaps and digestive-friendly habits, it is possible to enjoy the season's flavours without the discomfort.

Yay or nay: Medical advice from influencers

BIASED or misleading medical advice shared by social media influencers can cause harm and requires coordinated action by governments and platforms to protect the public, argue experts in *The BMJ* medical journal.

Social media influencers are a growing source of medical advice, say Austria's MCI Innsbruck health policy and communication professor Dr Raffael Heiss and his colleagues from Austria and the United States.

More than 70% of young adults in the US follow influencers, and over 40% have purchased products based on their recommendations.

However, the academicians warn that influencer advice can be subject to four sources of bias:

- > Lack of medical expertise or relevant knowledge
- > Industry influence
- > Entrepreneurial interests, and
- > Personal beliefs.

"Such advice can cause psychological, physical, financial and systemic harm – from inaccurate self-diagnosis and inappropriate treatments to unnecessary spending and higher healthcare costs," they write.

A prominent example is American celebrity Kim Kardashian, who encouraged her 360 million Instagram followers to have full body screening with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) – a test without proven benefits and linked to overdiagnosis, unnecessary interventions and costs.



Even social media influencers who have health-related qualifications may be giving biased information due to entrepreneurial interests or personal beliefs. — This image is human-created, AI-aided

Influencers with health-related credentials can also provide misleading advice.

For instance, American chiropractor Eric Berg, who has 14 million YouTube subscribers, promotes high-dose supplementation while selling his own brand of vitamin D and other supplements, some of which were subject to a legal warning for lead content above safety levels.

The effect of these biases is magnified by influencers' ability to form real or one-sided (often referred to as "parasocial") bonds with followers, making them highly persuasive communicators, say the authors. They acknowledge that some

influencers do provide useful health advice, including doctors and others who help to debunk common misconceptions, while influencers who are patients themselves may also provide valuable peer support, especially for stigmatised conditions, by creating safe spaces and sharing personal experiences.

Nevertheless, they say maximising the benefits and minimising the harms of influencers' medical advice will require collaboration between multiple stakeholders, particularly governments and social media platforms.

- Strategies include:
- > Effective regulation
 - > Stronger platform and influ-

encer accountability, and
> User empowerment through targeted education and access to reliable, fact-checked information.

The authors acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, but conclude: "Together, these strategies can help create a safer information environment in which influencers are constructive, rather than harmful, sources of health advice."

Regulating and moderating platforms and influencers is necessary, but fostering trust through verified communities, clinician-endorsed forums and participatory public health campaigns, will be indispensable, say Harvard University TH Chan School of Public Health Doctor of Public Health candidate and Prajna Leadership Fellow Tina Purnat and Weill Cornell Medical College clinical assistant professor of medicine Dr David Scales in a linked editorial.

They discuss how digital platforms, clinical encounters and community spaces – both online and offline – shape what people see, believe and do, including how evidence is negotiated in clinical consultations.

"Shared decision-making must evolve for the digital age," they write.

"The key is structuring interventions around people's information environments, where exposure – like exposure to physical environments – shapes health and deserves similar care."

In a linked feature, *The BMJ*

editorial registrar Dr Stephanie Santos Paulo speaks to 'patient influencers' who have amassed large followings on social media by sharing personal stories of their conditions and care that foster a sense of authenticity and emotional connection with followers.

"I think, partly, people are finding social media better for answers because it's not easy to get hold of a medical professional," says Liam Robertson, whose Instagram page @livingwithulcerativecolitis has 9,300 followers.

"It's almost like a strategy to help them," he adds.

"I don't feel like they should need that, but we do."

Lily Mae, whose Instagram account @chronicallylil details her life with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, endometriosis and vascular compression syndrome, says: "I wish healthcare professionals would listen and engage more with patient communities online."

"There's such a wealth of firsthand knowledge being shared – real stories, symptoms and lived experiences that could help improve care if more providers took the time to understand them."

Jen Moore, who posts about endometriosis and adenomyosis on her Instagram account @jen.dometrios, emphasises the role of patient influencers in signposting followers towards medical professionals.

"Unless we involve clinicians in what we're trying to do, nothing's going to change," she says.

WHO warns of increase in malaria cases, deaths

Heal

By AFP

DEATHS linked to malaria rose last year according to the World Health Organisation, which also warns of an increase in cases and resistance to current treatment.

There were 282 million cases and 610,000 deaths recorded worldwide last year — slightly up on the previous 12 months — underlining the mosquito-borne disease as a continuing serious global health issue.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the increase in deaths and cases, combined with funding cuts "threaten to roll back the progress we have made over the past two decades".

But he added: "None of these challenges is insurmountable. With the leadership of the most-affected countries and targeted investment, the vision of a malaria-free world remains achievable."

Africa remains the hardest-hit region, accounting for 94 per cent of cases and 95 per cent of malaria deaths, with three-quarters of fatalities occurring in children under 5.

Five countries — the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda — account for more than half of the number of

cases, the WHO said in a new report.

But the global health agency said progress had still been made.

Since the WHO approved the first vaccines against malaria in 2021, 24 countries have introduced routine immunisation programmes.

Chemoprevention, which involves the use of medication to prevent infection during high-risk malaria seasons, is now being implemented in 20 countries, reaching 54 million children in 2024 — up from about 200,000 in 2021.

The WHO has now certified 47 countries and one territory as being exempt from malaria, including Cape Verde and Egypt in 2024, as well as Georgia, Suriname and Timor-Leste this year.

Progress in the fight against malaria

had already stalled in recent years, notably because of climate change, an increase in conflict and resistance to drugs and insecticides.

The WHO's director of malaria and neglected tropical diseases Daniel Ngamije said underfunding of malaria response programmes had exacerbated the challenges.

There was now an "obvious risk in massive uncontrolled resurgence of disease", he added.

The WHO said its targets for cutting malaria deaths remained "far off track".

The 610,000 deaths in 2024 correspond to 13.8 deaths per 100,000 people — more than three times the global target of 4.5 deaths per 100,000.



SYMPTOMS OF MALARIA



Headache



Vomiting



Fever



Nausea



Dry Cough

There were some 282 million cases and 610,000 deaths recorded worldwide last year. PICTURE CREDIT: BROFX — FREPIK



Kulit Terkena **MINYAK PANAS** Ketahui Cara Rawatan Awal

KECEDERAAN akibat kulit terkena minyak panas merupakan antara jenis melecur yang paling kerap berlaku di dapur, sama ada ketika memasak, menggoreng, atau mengendalkan makanan yang berlemak dan panas.

Situasi ini boleh menyebabkan rasa sakit yang kuat, kemerahan pada kulit, melepuh, dan dalam keadaan lebih serius, kerosakan tisu yang mendalam. Oleh itu, mengetahui rawatan awal yang betul sangat penting bagi mengurangkan kerosakan kulit serta mencegah jangkitan yang boleh memudaratkan.

Apabila kulit terkena minyak panas, langkah pertama yang perlu dilakukan ialah menyejukkan kawasan yang melecur. Lalukan bahagian yang terkena minyak panas di bawah air bersuhu normal yang mengalir selama 10 hingga 20 minit. Tindakan ini membantu menurunkan suhu kulit dan mengurangkan kesakitan serta bengkak. Elakkan menggunakan air yang terlalu sejuk atau ais kerana ia boleh merosakkan tisu dan memburukkan lagi keadaan kulit. Setelah itu, keringkan kawasan yang terjerjas dengan lembut menggunakan kain yang bersih.

Jika kawasan melecur mula menunjukkan tanda-tanda lepuh, jangan sesekali memecahkannya. Lepuh berfungsi sebagai perlindungan semula jadi kulit bagi mengelakkan jangkitan. Sebaliknya, tutup kawasan tersebut dengan kain kasa yang bersih dan tidak melekat pada kulit. Elakkan menyapu bahan-bahan seperti mentega, ubat gigi atau minyak pada kulit yang melecur kerana ia boleh mengekalkan haba dan menyebabkan lebih banyak kerosakan tisu.

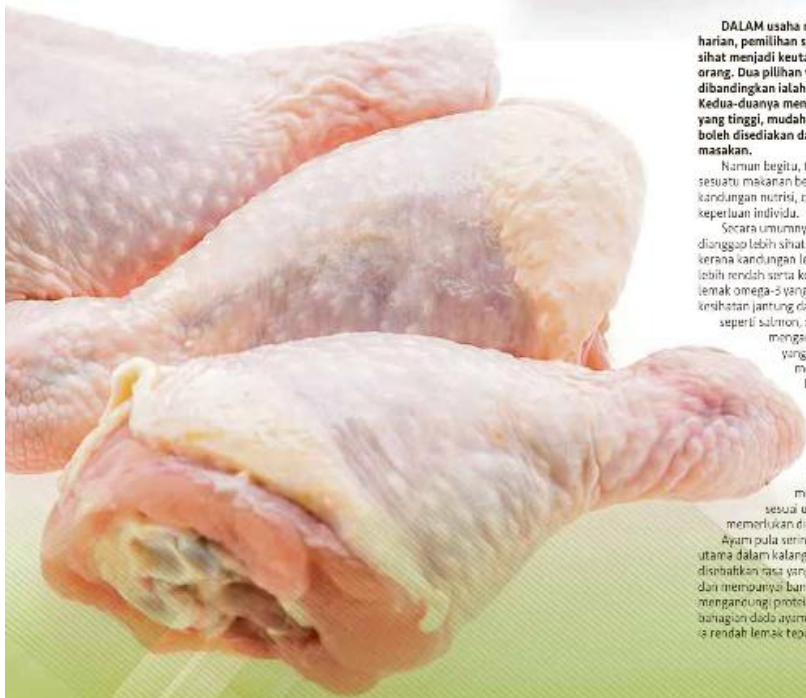
Penggunaan krim antiseptik atau gel lidah buaya boleh membantu menyejukkan kulit dan mempercepatkan proses pemulihan. Pengambilan ubat tahan sakit seperti paracetamol atau ibuprofen juga boleh membantu mengurangkan ketidakselesaan. Namun, jika melecur meliputi kawasan yang luas, melibatkan muka, tangan, kaki, atau sekiranya kulit kelihatan sangat merah, berair atau berbau, segera dapatkan rawatan perubatan kerana ia mungkin merupakan tanda melecur tahap lebih serius.

Langkah pencegahan turut memainkan peranan penting dalam mengurangkan risiko kulit terkena minyak panas. Pastikan pemegang kualiti sentiasa kukuh, gunakan penutup ketika menggoreng, dan jauhkan kanak-kanak daripada kawasan memasak. Memakai pakaian berlengan panjang dan apron juga dapat memberikan perlindungan tambahan.

Kesimpulannya, kecederaan akibat kulit terkena minyak panas boleh berlaku tanpa diduga, namun rawatan awal yang betul dapat mengurangkan komplikasi serta mempercepatkan proses penyembuhan. Dengan langkah pencegahan yang sesuai dan pengetahuan mengenai rawatan awal, risiko melecur boleh diminimumkan dan keselamatan ketika memasak dapat dipertingkatkan. Semoga panduan ini membantu anda menangani situasi kecemasan dengan lebih yakin dan berkesan.

IKAN atau AYAM

Mana Lebih Sehat Sebagai Sumber Protein?



DALAM usaha menjaga pemakanan harian, pemilihan sumber protein yang sihat menjadi keutamaan bagi ramai orang. Dua pilihan yang paling kerap dibandingkan ialah ikan dan ayam. Kedua-duanya mempunyai protein yang tinggi, mudah didapati dan boleh disediakan dalam pelbagai cara masakan.

Namun begitu, tahap kesihatan sesuatu makanan bergantung kepada kandungan nutrisi, cara penyediaan, serta keperluan individu.

Secara umumnya, ikan sering dianggap lebih sihat berbanding ayam kerana kandungan lemaknya yang lebih rendah serta kehadiran asid lemak omega-3 yang penting untuk kesihatan jantung dan otak. Ikan seperti salmon, sardin dan tenggiri mengandungi omega-3 yang boleh membantu mengurangkan keradangan, menstabilkan kadar trigliserida dan menyokong fungsi kognitif. Selain itu, protein dalam ikan juga lebih mudah dihadam dan sesuai untuk mereka yang memerlukan diet rendah lemak. Ayam pula sering menjadi pilihan utama dalam kalangan masyarakat disebabkan rasa yang sedap, murah dan mempunyai banyak bahagian yang mengandungi protein, terutamanya bahagian dada ayam tanpa kulit. Kerana ia rendah lemak tepu dan tinggi protein,

menjadikannya pilihan popular bagi mereka yang ingin membina otot atau menurunkan berat badan. Ayam juga lebih serba guna dalam penyediaan hidangan harian. Namun, kandungan nutrisinya boleh terjejas jika dimasak menggunakan kerdah yang tidak sihat seperti menggoreng atau menggunakan terlalu banyak minyak.

Realitinya, tiada satu pun makanan yang mampu membekalkan semua nutrisi yang diperlukan tubuh. Oleh itu, kita perlu menitiknati pelbagai jenis hidangan bagi memastikan keperluan nutrisi harian dipenuhi. Jika dibandingkan, ikan dan ayam masing-masing mempunyai khasiat tersendiri. Mengambil kedua-duanya secara bergilir adalah pilihan terbaik supaya manfaat nutrisi daripada kedua-duanya dapat diperoleh. Individu juga digalakkan menyeimbangkan kedua-dua sumber protein ini bagi mendapatkan variasi nutrisi yang lebih seimbang dalam diet harian.

Kesimpulannya, ikan dan ayam masing-masing mempunyai kelebihan tersendiri, dan pilihan paling sihat bergantung kepada keperluan tubuh serta cara penyediaannya. Bagi mereka yang mengutamakan kesihatan jantung dan pemakanan rendah lemak, ikan merupakan pilihan lebih baik. Namun, ayam tanpa kulit yang dimasak dengan cara yang sihat tetap menjadi sumber protein yang berkualiti dan berkhasiat. Yang penting, amalkan kepelbagaian dan pilih kerdah masakan yang sihat untuk memastikan tubuh mendapat manfaat optimum daripada kedua-duanya.

Border agency to introduce dedicated service scheme

PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Checkpoints and Border Agency (MCBA) is poised to introduce its own dedicated service scheme next year, signifying a major step in overhauling the agency's structure, culture and discipline.

Its Director-General Datuk Seri Mohd Shuhaily Mohd Zain said the scheme would end reliance on recruiting officers from six core agencies – Customs Department, Immigration Department, Road Transport Department, Wildlife and National Parks Department, Health Ministry and the Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services Department.

"Once our own MCBA scheme is established, we will be permitted to conduct new recruitment. One of the key aspects I will emphasise is respect for authority, discipline and the chain of command, not merely understanding them but fully embedding the culture.

"It will be a regimented approach, purely to instil discipline and to change the current state of affairs. This is the best opportunity for us to implement this reform as everyone has been saying: 'This has been going on for too long. How much longer must we continue like this?'"

He was speaking yesterday during a media briefing on MCBA's achievements and its direction for 2026.

He was speaking yesterday during a media briefing on MCBA's achievements and its direction for 2026.

Mohd Shuhaily said the initiative aligns with the government's aspiration to reinforce national entry point controls to be more effective, transparent and trusted by the public, while also ensuring that MCBA develops as an integrated and professional border security agency.

He added that Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar has acknowledged and endorsed the move.

On efforts to instil a "chain of command" culture, Mohd Shuhaily said the current work culture across the six core agencies involved is still not fully "regimented", despite each one having its own rank and training systems.

Explaining this with an example, he cited the longstanding directive prohibiting immigration officers from using mobile phones at inspection counters.

"This directive has been in place for decades, issued by the Immigration director-general. I feel I've talked myself hoarse, written the orders. My pen is nearly worn out. Yet, it still happens. Why? Because they do not respect the chain of command. If this continues, it is as if I am turning a blind eye."

Mohd Shuhaily stressed that change within the national border control service is inevitable and aligns with public demand and expectation.

– Bernama