



Ask Doctor Dr Karuhanga



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Why do I always feel sleepy after eating gonja?

I feel sleepy after eating gonja, but not after other foods. Could it be because I am overweight? Sula Aromakech

Dear Sula,

Obesity, defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher, is a condition characterised by excessive body fat. This can lead to a range of health risks, including excessive daytime sleepiness, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, snoring, certain types of cancer, and joint pain such as osteoarthritis.

Gonja, or plantain, is a type of banana that is typically eaten cooked or roasted when ripe. As it ripens, the starch in plantain converts to sugar, making it sweet and enjoyable to eat.

People often feel sleepy after eating due to increased blood flow to the digestive system and less blood flow to the brain.

Foods high in starch, such as posho or green plantain, or those high in sugar, such as ripe plantain, can contribute to this drowsiness. Plantains are also rich in tryptophan, an amino acid that the body converts



into serotonin and melatonin, substances known to induce relaxation and sleepiness.

When we consume sugary foods, such as plantain, the pancreas releases a significant amount of insulin, which can ultimately lead to increased serotonin and melatonin levels in the brain.

To avoid feeling sleepy after meals, it is essential to improve your overall sleeping habits. This includes engaging in regular physical exercise and moderating your intake of plantains.

Additionally, avoiding daytime naps can help ensure better nighttime sleep and reduce daytime drowsiness, including after eating. It is important to note that excessive sleepiness can sometimes indicate a serious health issue, such as celiac disease, anaemia, food intolerances, allergies, nutritional deficiencies, or an underactive thyroid.

While I do not suspect these conditions are affecting you, it is advisable to consult your doctor to rule them out.