

Eat Healthy Think Better

Say healthy food and often the instant reaction is smirking, making a long face or a disdainful expression. For long, 'healthy food' has been associated with bland and tasteless meals. However, with changing times, healthy food is not boring and can actually be flavoursome. **Bindu Gopal Rao**, speaks to experts to find out the tricks

Choose Right

A major part of the calories come from carbohydrates, and we do not take in sufficient amounts of protein and fibre on a daily basis. This is where the imbalance occurs. "To begin making healthier food choices, start with your breakfast. Protein shakes are an amazing source of high quality protein and a great way to increase your protein intake. Aim for protein shakes which are low in sugar, and provide at least 15 grams of protein, along with vitamins and minerals. Never ever completely cut down on any nutrient from your diet unless it is advised by your physician," says Sreyashi Moitra, Nutritionist Herbalife India Pvt. Ltd. Nutritionist Nikhil Chaudhary, adds, "Natural, whole and unprocessed foods are nutritious, safe to eat and keep lifestyle diseases at bay. Processed, sugary, fatty, refined, un-whole and processed foods are making the population fatter and lead to onset of various lifestyle diseases."

Carbohydrates Debate

Making healthy food choices is not easy. If you have been leading a sedentary lifestyle and eating unhealthy food for a long time, sticking to eating healthy might just be more difficult. But remember, consistency is the key to a better and a healthier life. You have heard it before and will hear it again, that too much of carbohydrates, is not good for your health. But, did you know that cutting out on carbs completely can have negative effects on your body? "Many exercisers and dieters restrict their carbs intake completely, to get faster weight loss results, but in

reality, the body needs carbohydrates. More so, when you are working out, as your body uses muscle glycogen as a primary source of energy. Sweating off all the carbohydrates, can have a noticeable negative effect on your body, causing weakness in your muscles. Eliminate carbs from unhealthy sources like highly processed foods and refined sugars; instead stick to home-made foods. *Chapattis* are a good source of carbohydrates and also contains protein and fibre. Avoid too much of rice or potatoes," says Dolly Kumar, Founder and Director, GAIA.

Mehar Rajput, Dietician and Nutritionist, Fitpass advises, "Oats and quinoa are fibre rich carbs that keep you feeling full and satiated for a longer period of time and are great diet options for your breakfast meal. They keep your heart healthy and also control blood sugar, which makes these foods diabetic friendly."



Fibre and Protein Boost

Chicken and eggs also keep you feeling satiated and are natural sources of protein with a high biological value of protein. They are also rich in calcium, healthy fats, magnesium and iron. Eggs, chicken and spinach are good options for people who want to lose weight, as well as people who want to gain muscles. Being low in calories and high in proteins, these are the perfect way to derive protein for everyone, even across various age groups. "A super food, 'spirulina' (it is a biomass of cyanobacteria that can be consumed by humans and other animals) contains one of the richest natural sources of protein making it the ideal nutrition food. Spirulina improves overall health and aids in maintaining optimum weight. Besides spirulina, indulge in a hearty bowl of muesli with skimmed milk and sliced fresh fruits or a steaming bowl of oatmeal (with some masala or vegetables or even fruits) and get bursts of protein and fibre," says Kumar.

Bash the Fat

If you are consuming fats from unhealthy sources like junk foods, then it is time to stop as calories from unhealthy fats are difficult to shed. "Instead of regular mustard or refined oil, use extra light olive oil which is a great alternative to regular cooking oil, and is ideal for cooking all kinds of cuisines. It has a subtle flavour and light texture that complements every dish perfectly. Rich in good fats and antioxidants, olive oil helps manage cholesterol and thus protects your heart," says Kumar.

Almonds, walnuts, flax seeds and other healthy fats are good diet options, especially for people suffering from heart problems, or cardiovascular problems. "These are rich in MUFA (Mono Unsaturated Fatty Acids), PUFA (Poly

Unsaturated Fatty Acids) and Omega 3 fatty acids. Moreover, they are excellent to snack on and effective to curb cravings," says Rajput.

Metabolism Matters

Did you know that your Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR) can be enhanced by a cup of green tea? BMR is the rate at which your body uses energy,

when you are resting in order to keep vital functions going such as breathing. This means, your body sheds some calories even while you are resting. Green tea is rich in anti-oxidants, particularly epigallocatechin gallate or EGCG; this helps in weight loss and lowers the risk of obesity.

Besides, it also helps regulate blood sugar level and fights stress and fatigue. Yogurt is a great source of bone-building calcium, but its real strength lies in live beneficial bacteria, known as probiotics, which control the growth of harmful bacteria in your gut.

What to eat & what to ditch

- Eat the fruit, ditch the juice especially strained juices.
- Eat the nuts and seeds, ditch the oils.
- Eat whole grain flours, and ditch the refined flours.
- Eat lentils and pulses with skin, ditch the polished ones.
- Eat lots of vegetables, ditch the packaged foods



"Eating more yogurt could help with inflammatory bowel disease, ulcers, urinary tract infections and vaginal yeast infections. In the case of a sweet craving, instead of grabbing an ice-cream or a chocolate, it's a good idea to just consume a bowl of yogurt and throw in chopped pieces of any seasonal fruit, to add the natural glucose and fibre," says Shirin Kapadia Fitness Consultant and Nutritionist. As Shalini Arvind, Chief Dietician, Fortis Hospital, Bannerghatta Road says, "Healthy diet is not about adhering to nutrition philosophies, remaining unreasonably thin, or denying yourself the food you love. Instead, it's about feeling great with more energy and keeping yourself as healthy as possible - all of which can be refined by adapting some nutrition and using them in a way it works for you."