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# CUT THE JUNK FOR HEALTHY ADULT LIFE

With 25% overweight schoolchildren, Delhi is the obesity capital of India and set for an explosion of lifestyle ailments in coming years

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and set for an explosion of lifestyle ailments in coming years

Durgesh Nandan Jha | TNN

**T**oday, kids are blamed for bingeing on fast food that makes them prone to obesity, diabetes and even heart disease in later life. According to a study conducted by the Diabetes Foundation of India, around 25% of schoolchildren in Delhi — the highest in the country — are overweight or obese. And it's clearly a lifestyle problem because, compared to 34% of private school students, only 12% government school students are overweight.

Many experts consider obesity the most serious epidemic among India's children. Seema Gulati, who headed the study, says body weight is a concern because, as it has no immediate health effect in childhood, people tend to ignore the warning signs. "It's time we change our mindset. All schools can have special counselling on child health, which includes dietary habits," says Gulati, adding that controlling childhood obesity can cut down half of all non-communicable diseases — diabetes, heart disease, kidney dysfunction and hypertension.

Dr Harshpal S Sachdev, senior paediatric consultant at the Sitaram Bhatia Institute of Science and Research, says junk food adds to the risk of fat deposition in blood. "The body is not able to dispose of it fast, increasing the chances of heart disease and other complications".

But don't target junk food alone, blame your genes, too. New research shows Delhiites have a gene that puts them at risk of higher fat levels in blood, increased heart disease risk and a host of other metabolic disorders.

The New Delhi Birth Cohort study — published in the medical journal *Lipids in Health and Disease* recently — has found that one out of every five Delhiites carries the mutated gene APOA5. Similar genes have been found in separate studies conducted in Mysore, Pune and Hyderabad as well.

"All persons carrying this gene had at least 23.6 mg/dl higher fat content or triglyceride levels compared to those with a normal gene, irrespective of their lifestyle, body fat and obesity. The children inherit the same gene, putting them at risk of higher levels of triglyceride, a type of fat found in blood and the earliest biochemical marker of metabolic disturbance," says Dr Sachdev, a primary author of the study that followed over 1,526 Delhiites since 1969 and was funded by National Centre for Health Statistics, USA, and Indian Council of Medical Research. Triglyceride levels below 150ml/dl are considered normal.

According to Dr Anoop Misra, director and head, department of diabetes and metabolic diseases, Fortis Hospitals, parents must pay attention to their children's diets.

"Mothers should prepare healthy tiffin and insist that the child has lunch in school. Parents should keep a tab at home, too. Taking children out for regular walks during evening or after dinner can also help in controlling obesity and extra fat deposition."

Dr Rekha Sharma, the president of the Indian Dietetic Association, says children also suffer from deficiency of micronutrients like essential vitamins and minerals like calcium, protein, vitamins and iron, which we get from milk, fresh fruit, whole-grain food and fibrous vegetables. "They simply avoid healthy food or at the least do not like them," she says.

Dr Sujet Jha, head of the endocrinology department at Max Hospital, Saket, wants the government to undertake initiatives such as advertising about good food choices on TV. "The government's diabetes screening programme is not going to yield results. We need to develop human resources and infrastructure to tackle the problem rather than going on assessing it forever," he says.



**BASICS OF A BALANCED DIET**

FOOD GROUPS	GRAMS PER PORTION					
	Infants (0-6 months)	1-3 yrs	4-6 yrs	7-9 yrs	10-12 yrs	
Cereals and millets	30	0.5	02	04	06	10
Pulses	30	0.25	01	1.0	02	02
Milk & milk products	100	04	05	05	05	05
Roots & tubers	100	0.5	0.5	01	01	01

**EATING BETTER, HEALTHIER**

- Give children cereal with milk, but add crushed dates instead of sugar to sweeten it
- Give children bread preparations like sandwich, subs or toast only once a week, substituting white bread with brown or whole-wheat bread
- Shallow fry cutlets instead of deep-frying them. Moreover, make the cutlets with less potatoes and more vegetables. You can also roll them into rotis to make frankies
- Include uttappam, idli or dosa in the child's

**NUTRIENT PLATTER**

**Calcium**  
Food Items | Milk and milk products

**Potassium & Magnesium**  
Food Items | Cereals, nuts, dry fruits, broccoli, cabbage, sprouts, cauliflower

**Protein**  
Food Items | Milk and dairy products, fish, legumes, meat, nuts, dry fruits

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Cereals and millets	30	0.5	02	04	06	10
Pulses	30	0.25	01	1.0	02	02
Milk & milk products	100	04	05	05	05	05
Roots & tubers	100	0.5	0.5	01	01	01
Green leafy vegetables	100	0.25	0.5	0.5	01	01
Fruits	100	01	01	01	01	01
Sugar	5	02	03	04	04	06
Fat/oil	5	04	05	05	06	04

(Source: 'Dietary Guidelines for Indians' manual of the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad)

### EATING BETTER, HEALTHIER

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- Shallow fry cutlets instead of deep-frying them. Moreover, make the cutlets with less potatoes and more vegetables. You can also roll them into rotis to make frankies
- Include uttappam, idli or dosa in the child's snack menu at least once a week
- Steam dahi vadas and add freshly prepared chutneys. You can include spinach in the chutney, so that kids get nutrition without knowing they are eating spinach
- Avoid added sugar in beverages. Substitute sweetened sodas with healthier options like fruit juices, buttermilk and nimboo paani

### NUTRIENT PLATTER

- Calcium**  
Food Items | Milk and milk products
- Potassium & Magnesium**  
Food Items | Cereals, nuts, dry fruits, broccoli, cabbage, sprouts, cauliflower
- Protein**  
Food Items | Milk and dairy products, fish, legumes, meat, nuts, dry fruits
- Iron**  
Food Items | Fish, cereals
- Vitamin A**  
Food Items | Carrot, broccoli, sweet potato, spinach, pumpkin, cheddar cheese, egg, papaya, mango, apricot, peas, milk
- Vitamin B**  
Food Items | Cereals, meat, liver, lentils, potatoes, banana, chilli pepper, whole grains, beans
- Vitamin C**  
Food Items | Citrus fruits (orange, lemon, amla, sweetlime), broccoli
- Vitamin D**  
Food Items | Cereals, fish, eggs
- Vitamin E**  
Food Items | Nuts, dry fruits
- Carotene**  
Food Items | Raw tomatoes, mango, papaya, dried apricots & peaches, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, leafy vegetables (spinach, methi), cooked tomatoes, carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin, onion and garlic

### DELHI FOR KIDS

Cheesy pizzas, delectable burgers and chilled colas make for a great birthday party, but can wreak havoc on children's health if part of their daily diet. Even the pasta that goes straight from packet to plate in minutes or juice-out-of-the-box does little to help.



Children, heavily influenced by advertisements or peers, usually pester their parents for 'fast food'. Hard-pressed for time, the latter give in. How do you think parents can wean away their children from tempting junk food to tasty but healthy meals?

- Q1. Should parents teach children to eat healthy from an early age?**  
**Q2. Should parents replace what kids want with what they need?**

**SMS** Type S0 <space> Q1/Q2 <space> YES or NO <space> your views and name. SMS to 58888

**EMAIL** [speakout@timesgroup.com](mailto:speakout@timesgroup.com) with 'healthy' mentioned in the subject line

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