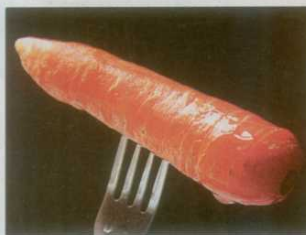


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CHOMP AND CHILL



Here's what you should be eating this winter

■ IRENA AKBAR

BEFORE YOU start stocking up on the woollens this season, you should be fortifying your immune system. Germs that don't survive the summer heat thrive in your body during winters and bring on the pesky colds. The best way for your body to fight back is the right diet. "Nutrients important during this time of the year are vitamin C, A and E—all three have strong anti-oxidant properties. Eat foods that have a good quantity of them," says Dr Parmeet Kaur, chief dietician, All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi. Some tips for an ideal winter diet:

■ **Go traditional:** Though traditional winter delicacies are apparently fattening, doctors say they are actually quite healthy. *Gajar ka halwa*, a popular winter dessert, for instance, is a combo of vitamin A-rich carrot and vitamin-E rich nuts. What about the oil in it? "It's perfectly fine for a normal-weight person to have four teaspoons a day of oil/ghee/butter. Fat is required to ease the absorption of vitamins A and E," says Dr Kaur. This means you can also safely top with butter or ghee your *makki ki roti* (corn bread), another healthy desi winter delight. "Corn is a rich source of zeaxanthin, a carotenoid (phytonutrient or a plant-based compound) which, besides giving corn its yellow colour, has anti-oxidant



properties," says Dr Kaur. ■ **Gorge on fruits** "Nature," says Dr Kajal Pandya of Sitaram Institute of Science and Research, Delhi, "knows best to take care of us. Thus, seasonal fruits are the key to stay healthy." Take citrus fruits such as oranges, sweet-lime, guava and amla—available in plenty during this time of the year—as they are rich in vitamin C, which helps to fight free radicals in the body and slows down ageing and neuro-degeneration. Purple grapes are also a healthy option as they are high on flavonoids, phytochemicals known to help prevent cancer.

■ **Crunch on nuts:** Dr Kaur advises having almonds, peanuts, pistachios and walnuts as each of them contains vitamin E, a strong anti-oxidant that boosts immunity. Buy a small bagful of peanuts

from the roadside vendor and snack on them often.

■ **Splurge on veggies:** Dr Ritika Samaddar, chief dietician, Max Health Care, Delhi, suggests five veggies that'll help you beat the chill: broccoli (rich source of vitamin C, fibre, folate, calcium and iron), spinach (loads of iron), lettuce (high on vitamin A and C), carrot (a primary source of vitamin A) and radish (vitamin C).

■ **Meat treat:** Since zinc and selenium help boost immunity, Dr Samaddar advises the intake of their sources—meat, fish and eggs. You can also make vegetable soups with chicken stock, she advises.

■ **Soup it up.** Hot soups and broths are advisable not only because they help fight colds but also help keep a watch on your weight. A vegetable soup with whole-wheat bread will keep you warm and full for hours. "Try having soup for one of your main meals every day in winter," advises Dr Samaddar.

■ **Tea:** Adding ginger or basil to your cuppa soothes the throat.

■ **Honey:** A spoonful at the first sign of a sore throat or runny nose can kill the bacteria responsible and speed up recovery.

■ **Don't booze:** There's no scientific evidence of alcohol's heating properties but Dr Kaur says "because one millilitre of liquor contains seven kilocalories, consuming alcoholic drinks equals depositing fat—an insulator that keeps us warm." ♦