

Children fight diabetes, obesity with awareness

Strict Monitoring By Schools, Parents Matters

Durgesh Nandan Jha | TNN

New Delhi: They've been stereotyped as couch potatoes, obese and susceptible to adulthood diseases like diabetes, but urban children are learning to fight back with awareness, self-control and a zeal for fitness.

On Children's Day, which is also World Diabetes Day, TOI found a surprising level of information about obesity and related disorders among schoolchildren. While stricter monitoring by schools and parents has led the change, children deserve credit for cutting their intake of burgers, pizza and aerated drinks, and adopting a more active routine. Anahat Singh, 10, who studies at KR Mangalam School in Vikaspuri, says he prefers milk with cornflakes, brown bread or bananas for breakfast. "I carry tiffin prepared by mom to school. Homemade food is healthiest. I have pizza and burgers also, but only on occasions like birthday parties," he adds. TV viewing time, he says, is now fixed at home because he has to go for theatre classes and tuitions.

"Diabetes sugar ki bimari hai (diabetes is a blood sugar-related disorder) and obesity means being fat. Junk food causes both, we know that. Our school has weekly periods for exercise and outdoor activities and teachers also keep telling us about good food habits," says Varsha, a student of Kendriya Vidyalaya in Andrews Ganj.

According to Asha Rani Singh, who teaches science at Laxman Public School, children in the age group of 14-18 years are careful about what they eat. "They are more aware and ready to change. We just need to give them good options. Our school has restricted sale of aerated drinks and chips. We have introduced substitutes like milk products and different variants of Indi-

FROM SWEET TO SWEAT



KICK THE JUNK FOOD HABIT

FAT

Cola, fruit juice, canned juice
Pizza, burger, white bread, noodles
Ice cream, ice cream shake

FI

Whole fruit, lassi, coconut water
Brown bread, wheat porridge, sprouts
Fruit salad, fruit pudding, skimmed milk shake

Live healthy to stay lean

- ▶ Eat healthy meals
- ▶ Avoid snacking
- ▶ Eat slowly
- ▶ Drink plenty of water
- ▶ Cut screen time (TV, computer, video games) to less than 2 hours
- ▶ Play outdoors for an hour at least

Watch your BMI

Body mass index (BMI) is the ratio of weight (in kg) to height (in metres). Your BMI should be below the limit specified for your age and sex

| Age | BMI limit (boy/girl) |
|----------|----------------------|
| 14 years | 21.5/21.6 |
| 15 years | 21.9/22.8 |
| 16 years | 22.7/23.7 |
| 17 years | 22.8/23.9 |
| 18 years | 23.2/23.9 |

an food items that have high nutrient value, like salads, upma and rajma chawal, which they like a lot," she says.

"You don't feed your child to make him HeMan anymore. Healthy means having a normal diet, comprising the right amount of fat, protein etc," says Anuja Saxena, who has a one-year-old daughter.

Dr Nikhil Tandon, profes-

DIABETES DAY

sor of endocrinology and metabolism at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), says up to 20% of the students in private schools suffer from obesity and related health problems, such as impaired glucose tolerance and abnormal cholesterol.

"Because there is no immediate health effect in case of childhood obesity family and the society 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 Dr Seema Gulati, chief project officer (nutrition), Diabetes Foundation of India.

Dr Sujet Jha, head of the department of endocrinology at Max Hospital, Saket says the government needs to undertake initiatives like advertising about good food choices on TV. "The diabetes screening programme started by the ministry 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.

Dr Anoop Mishra, director of Department of Diabetes & Metabolic Diseases, Fortis Hospitals adds, "If we are able to tackle childhood obesity, half of all non-communicable diseases — diabetes, heart disease, kidney dysfunction and hypertension — can be avoided".