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"Right nutrition can empower the immune system to fight the virus"

How nutrition can help in fighting these deadly viruses?

By **Kalyani Sharma** | April 30, 2020



right-nutrition-can-empower-the-immune-system-to-fight-the-virus

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Nikhil Chaudhary, Nutritionist, Dietician and Wellness Coach talks about the role of immunity in fighting COVID-19

How nutrition can help in fighting these deadly viruses?

Viruses are very fragile and our immune systems are capable of fighting them. After all the current Covid-19 is also being fought by the plasma of the survivors which means the immune response (Antibodies) of one person is being used to fight the virus in another patient. Right nutrition can empower the immune system to fight the virus or wrong nutrition can suppress the immune system and let the virus multiply.

Some of the foods that promote better immune response are:

Healthy plant based proteins: They promote the production of antibodies that fight the virus. It is important to include beans, sprouts, mushrooms, lentils and legumes in the diet.

Vitamin C Rich foods: Vitamin C is important for the functioning of white blood cells and therefore you will always find these foods in the immune boosting food list. Out of 4 genes necessary to produce Vitamin c humans have 3 and we lost 1 gene because we consumed enormous quantities of fruits and vegetables over thousands of years. Suddenly we stopped eating them and switched to processed foods which weakened our immune system. Some foods rich in Vitamin C are goose berry, green chilly, all vegetables and fruits.

Avoid Sugars: Sugars suppresses immune activity and lets the virus or bacteria get a strong hold as the white blood cells do not act when sugar is presented. You can correlate this to diabetic being more prone to such infections, children who eat chocolates often get cold and cough and so on.

Liquids: Though the mechanism is not fully understood but one of the most powerful ways to fight any virus is to consume large quantities of healthy liquids like mineral water, infused water, turmeric water, green tea, herbal teas, buttermilk, green smoothies, etc. Avoid milk, fruit

juice, tea, coffee as they are not healthy for the body in general. This is probably the most important advice from a viral infection perspective.

Tell us little about the importance of diet and lifestyle and how are you working to promote it?

Diet and lifestyle determine if the internal environment of the body will be healthy or unhealthy. The DNA picks up these signals and acts accordingly. For eg; If there is a higher requirement of cholesterol in the body, the signal will be received by the liver cells and they start producing cholesterol. The cholesterol level shoots up. Similarly, at every level the body works with a feedback mechanism and diseases or health is an outcome of these responses which we see as symptoms. If the body is infected, immediately there is a response to increase the temperature of the body. Diet and lifestyle therefore play a role more important than even genetics.

I am working in an organic manner of changing one life at a time through my talks, webinars, write ups (Quora), videos (You tube), media support and personal consultation. I am very proud to say that every person who has gained from me is now creating more awareness themselves by acting as an epicentre of knowledge. I believe in empowering people with knowledge instead of making them dependent on me. It’s working very well.

How did you get on this journey of nutrition? What disease have you reversed through diet in this decade journey of yours?

Before I did my MSc Dietetics, as a Btech Biotechnologist, I believed that genes are dictators of our destiny. While I tried to look for answers in genetics, for me science always pointed towards biochemistry of nutrition, pathology, microbiology and physiology. As I delved deeper I found that diet and lifestyle are primary drivers of health and genes only enable the process.

A person has genes that can make them fat and also genes that helps them become thin. Any person can have both the genes working for them. But both never happen at the same time. Only one of the genes will be active at any point. The internal environment in the body will dictate which genes will get activated. Similar there are genes that promote cancer growth and genes that suppress it. By diet and lifestyle in most cases it is possible to prevent, reverse and

avoid recurrence of diseases like heart diseases, cancer, liver diseases, Diabetes, PCOD among others. I have seen it, done it and amazed to see how quick the body responds to it.

What kind of changes have you seen over the years, like awareness on health and especially the new products trends like keto diets etc and also being health conscious at individual levels?

There is a lot of awareness regarding the need for healthy food and lifestyle and people are eager to follow them. But unfortunately the problems are too many.

Industry is evolving faster to make addictive products and sell it as healthy food. By the time we realize that it's not healthy a lot of damage is already done. For eg: In India we do not have any regulation on trans-fat yet, Instant oats sometimes raise more blood sugar than ice creams, TBHQ in most fried foods sold by international brands is cancer casing.

It is easy to tell what to eat than to actually do it. People have difficult guidelines and recipes to follow in fad diets. Which most often people are unable to follow and sustain for a long period of time.

Focus is only on weight loss and calorie counts. Calories are not everything. A dinner at a pizzeria will give you calories which require a marathon to burn. But even if you do both, the organs still endure undue pressure and stress in processing it. Even people who achieve weight loss are unable to sustain it because they lose the motivation after reaching their desired weight and put on the weight back. The need is to focus on the process and weight loss will be an automatic outcome. Focus not on calories but on healthy natural food and we can achieve weight loss as well as great health.

Lot of health gurus and social media is misleading to gain attention and viewership. I have even seen dieticians promoting foods like white rice for weight loss. Their success stories are more because their clients spend hours in the gym and even for them I wouldn't recommend white rice. Social media is flooded with posts like drink lemon and honey to lose weight; drink cow urine to cure cancer; eat turmeric with black pepper and your disease will go away; etc. Unfortunately, people are misguided and when they don't see any results they get

disheartened. It is important to take care of the overall diet and know what exactly is good and what is not. This will come with knowledge only.

One good thing about any fad diet in the world is that it eliminates all junk foods which improves 50% of the health.

The need of the hour is to make things simple, avoid being obsessive, eat natural food and focus on health and not only on the waistline.

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