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Study reveals gaps in understanding protein requirements in Indian diet

Right To Protein, a nationwide public health awareness initiative, released the findings of a study that uncovers a paradox in India’s daily protein consumption habits.

By **Manbeena Chawla** | July 16, 2020



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Leading research agency, Nielsen surveyed 2,142 mothers across 16 Indian cities revealing a worrying trend where due to a poor understanding of protein as a macronutrient, Indians consume inadequate levels of proteins.

The study shows that although 95% of Indian mothers surveyed claim to know protein as a macronutrient, only 3% of the population really understand the prominent functions of protein or why one should consume it daily.

Across cities, 82% of mothers residing in mini metros such as Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Hyderabad were unable to correctly associate protein with its functions and attributed low importance to its consumption as a part of balanced meals.

Therefore, while eight out of ten mothers believe protein as 'important', protein may not adequately be included in their daily diet. Majority of the mothers (91%) are not able to relate to protein with its crucial functions such as repair of tissues in the body, muscle health and long-term immunity.

Some of the key findings include:

- Over 70% of Indian mothers strongly believe in common myths such as 'protein is difficult to digest', 'it leads to weight gain', and 'it is only for body-builders'.
- On an average 85% of mothers incorrectly believe that protein leads to 'weight gain' and mentioned that they would prioritise the consumption of vitamins and carbohydrates over protein for their families including for children. Most disturbingly, nearly 80% hold the view that lack of protein does not impact overall health!
- Majority of the mothers do not know the most common sources of plant-or-animal-based protein and failed to correctly identify 8 of 11 protein-rich food items presented to them. Furthermore, 81% of mothers incorrectly believe that just a regular Indian diet consisting of roti, dal, rice is enough for daily protein needs. As a result, only dairy and pulses are considered as the sources of protein in majority Indian households.

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