

# Adequate Nutrition Is Crucial To Fight Covid-19 Say Experts At Assocham's 'Illness To Wellness' Series

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## INVC NEWS

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The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), one of the apex trade associations of India concluded the second edition of the 'Illness to Wellness' series themed 'Building immunity through nutritious food during COVID-19' with Dr. Shikha Sharma, founder and managing director of Dr. Shikha's NutriHealth, being invited to be the cardinal speaker and Ms Sangeeta Narayan, nutrition educator and wellness consultant, acting as the moderator.

Supported by the hygiene brand SAVLON, the programme which promotes healthy living with focus on wellness and preventive health through healthy habits, diet, exercise, and holistic health saw the speakers stress on the importance of nutrition in the battle against COVID-19. The coronavirus, a highly communicable disease that originated from China has now spread globally and claimed millions of lives. Boosting one's immunity using local traditional nutritious food is being considered as the first course of action to be able to beat the virus if contracted.

Highlighting the need for inclusion of vitamins and minerals in our diet through nutritious food, Dr. Shikha Sharma said, "There are several foods which are rich in natural minerals and nutrients but we destroy their nutritional value in the course of our cooking and consumption practices. An example is wheat which in its original form is dalia, it has important minerals like phosphorus but in our strange wisdom we powder it into a refined maida which is nothing but starch and increases weight and risk of diabetes." She then went on to name traditional food items like barley, channa, sattu, seeds — pumpkin, sunflower, chia and flax along with others that can be included in diets for a nutrition boost across all age groups.

She also enlisted several Ayurvedic herbs that can be used to boost immunity and create an all-rounded diet. "Aswagandha is a very powerful herb that can be given to both seniors and children. It builds the body's immunity and reduces stress. Giloy purifies the blood and keeps the pH intact," she said. She later added tulsi and turmeric to the list.

Dismissing the need for a protein or carbohydrate rich diet, she stressed the importance of a balanced diet with ample supply of essential fatty acids, protein and carbs found through local traditional grains, millets, pulses, dairy products and greens. She said, "The beauty of Indian traditions during COVID times is that we need the support of this amazing knowledge of Indian Ayurveda and traditions to beat it."

The coronavirus has specifically turned fatal for individuals with existing comorbidities, for such cases, Dr. Sharma emphasised that their first course of action needs to address their issues through long-term preventive measures such as exercising, avoiding sugar and a maintaining a balanced diet.

Mr Anil Rajput, Chairman, ASSOCHAM CSR Council, weighing in on the economic and personal effect of coronavirus said, "COVID-19 has had de-stabilizing effect on almost all walks of life for almost 5 months now. Right now, from nations to societies to economies to health of individuals, it has been an extremely stressful period for all. It has forced on us an unprecedented situation. One has taken quite a bit of time for us to understand the magnitude and painful reality of how slow the recovery is likely to be. It is the individual who has been at the centre of all-round anxiety and insecurity be at economic or personal health front level."

Ms Sangeeta Narayan commenting on mental health and importance of a proper diet said, "Stress plays a very important part in mental health considering the current times. With everything changing, we have to be adaptive. The first and foremost thing is to have a proper 6-8 hour sleep, plan your day in advance, doing all the chores can be overwhelming so allocate tasks for each day whether living with a family or alone. Add fruits or food items rich in Vitamin C, they act as a stress buster and immunity booster. Having proper meals is important especially a nutritious and nourishing breakfast. Exercising plays a very important role in managing stress and keeping mind clear."

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