

## HEALTHY AND POSITIVE FOOD CONCEPTS

**Ques. - What are common Indian food beliefs, fads and taboos?**

**Ans.** Food habits are formed early in childhood, passed on from the elders in the family and perpetuated into adulthood. Food beliefs either encourage or discourage the consumption of particular foods. There can be neutral, harmless or harmful practices. Unfortunately, most of the harmful beliefs and prejudices (taboos) are associated with the diets of women and children, who are also the most vulnerable to malnutrition.

Exaggerated beneficial or harmful claims in respect of some foods, without scientific basis constitute food fads. In addition, the concept of **hot and cold foods** is widely prevalent.

**Hot foods** are believed to produce heat in the body. Some examples are jaggery, sugar, groundnuts, fried foods, mango, bajra, jowar, maize, eggs and meat.

**Papaya fruit** is strongly suspected to lead to abortion, though there is no scientific basis.

**Cold foods:** Buttermilk, curd, milk, green gram dhal, green leafy vegetables, ragi, barley flour and apples are considered as cold foods which are actually nutritious.

**Vegetarianism** is often practised in India on religious grounds. Since vitamin B is present only in foods of animal origin, vegetarians should ensure an adequate consumption of milk.

**Dietary Restriction:** During certain illnesses like measles and diarrhoea, dietary restriction is practised. This can aggravate malnutrition in young children.

**Ques. - What are the effects of the pre-cooking process?**

**Ans.** Foods, in their natural state, contain different nutrients in varying amounts.

Cooking improves the digestibility of most foods. Flesh foods get softened and easily chewable. Proper methods of cooking render foods palatable by improving the appearance, taste, flavour and texture, thereby enhancing acceptability. In addition, they help in destroying disease causing organisms and eliminating natural inhibitors of digestion. In the course of dietary preparation, depending on the recipe, foods are subjected to various processes such as washing, cutting, fermentation (idli, dosa, dhokal), germination and cooking.

In the Indian cuisine, **fermentation and germination (sprouting)** are common practices. These methods improve digestibility and increase nutrients such as B-complex vitamins and vitamin C.

Foods should be washed well before cooking and consumption to remove contaminants like pesticide residues, parasites and other extraneous material. However, certain precautions need to be taken while washing and cutting to minimize the loss of nutrients.

Repeated washing of food grains like rice and pulses results in losses of certain minerals and vitamins.

Vegetables and fruits should be washed thoroughly before cutting.

Cutting of vegetables into small pieces exposes a greater surface area of the foodstuff to the atmosphere, resulting in loss of vitamins due to oxidation. Therefore, vegetables should be cut into large pieces. Cut vegetables should not be soaked in water, as water-soluble minerals and vitamins get dissolved. Water in which the food grains and pulses/legumes have been soaked should not be discarded but put to use to prevent nutrient loss.

**Ques.- What are the different method of cooking food?**

**Ans.** There are many methods of cooking like boiling, steaming, pressure cooking, frying, roasting and baking.

**Boiling** is the most common method of cooking, during which heat-labile and water-soluble vitamins like vitamins B-complex and C are lost.

- The practice of using excess water while cooking rice should be discouraged since it leads to loss of vitamins; just sufficient water to be fully absorbed should be used.
- Vegetables should be cooked on low heat using just adequate water in a covered vessel to preserve flavour and nutrients and to reduce cooking time.
- Use of baking soda for hastening cooking of pulses should not be practiced, as it results in loss of vitamins.

**Frying** involves cooking food in oil/ghee at high temperatures.

**Shallow frying** involves use of much smaller amounts of oils than deep frying.

Repeated heating of oils particularly PUFA-rich oils, results in formation of peroxides and free radicals and, hence, should be avoided by using just enough oil.

Similarly, oils which have been repeatedly heated should not be mixed with fresh oil but should be used for procedures such as seasoning.

**Microwave cooking** is convenient, fast and preserves nutrients and also useful in reheating of food. But it can reheat or cook unevenly and leave some cold spots in the food by which harmful bacteria can enter into our body. So it is discouraged to use large amounts or big pieces in the microwave oven otherwise mix the food in between for even heating or cooking. Never use partially heated food. Don't cook frozen food in the microwave oven directly it leaves some parts of the food partially cooked.

Always use glass or pottery dishes and food grade microwave plastic dishes and wrap to reheat foods.

Approximate calorific value of some cooked food preparation are given below

### Approximate Calorific Value of Some Cooked Preparations

Preparation	Quantity for one serving	Calories (Kcal)
<b>1. Cereal</b>		
Rice	1 cup	170
Phulka	1 No.	80
Paratha	1 No.	150
Puri	1 No.	80
Bread	2 slices	170
Poha	1 cup	270
Upma	1 cup	270
Idli	2 Nos.	150
Dosa	1 No.	125
Kichidi	1 cup	200
Wheat porridge	1 cup	220
Semolina porridge	1 cup	220
Cereal flakes with milk (corn/wheat/rice)	1 cup	220
<b>2. Pulse</b>		
Plain dhal	½ cup	100
Sambar	1 cup	110
<b>3. Vegetable</b>		
With gravy	1 cup	170
Dry	1 cup	150
<b>4. Non-Vegetarian</b>		
Boiled egg	1 No.	90
Ommelette	1 No.	160
Fried egg	1 No.	160
Mutton curry	¾ cup	260
Chicken curry	¾ cup	240
Fish fried	2 big pieces	190
Fish cutlet	2 Nos.	190
Prawn curry	¾ cup	220
Keema kofta curry	¾ cup (6 small koftas)	240

Preparation	Quantity for one serving	Calories (Kcal)
<b>5. Savoury snacks</b>		
Bajji or pakora	8 Nos.	280
Besan ka pura	1 No.	220
Chat (Dahi-pakori)	5 pieces	220
Cheese balls	2 Nos.	250
Dahi vada	2 Nos.	180
Vada	2 Nos.	140
Masala vada	2 Nos.	150
Masala dosa	1 No.	200
Pea-kachori	2 Nos.	380
Potato bonda	2 Nos.	200
Sago vada	2 Nos.	210
Samosa	1 No.	200
Sandwiches (butter- 2tbsp)	2 Nos.	200
Vegetable puff	1 No.	200
Pizza (Cheese and tomato)	1 slice	200
<b>6. Chutneys</b>		
Coconut/groundnuts/til	2 tbsp	120
Tomato	1 tbsp	10
Tamarind (with jaggery)	1 tbsp	60
<b>7. Sweets and Desserts</b>		
Besan barfi	2 small pieces	400
Chikki	2 pieces	290
Fruit cake	1 piece	270
Rice puttu	½ cup	280
Sandesh	2 Nos.	140
Double ka meetha	½ cup	280
Halwa (kesari)	½ cup	320
Jelly/Jam	1 tbsp	20
Custard (caramel)	½ cup	160
Srikhand	½ cup	380
Milk chocolate	25 g	140
Ice-cream	½ cup	200

Preparation	Quantity for one serving	Calories (Kcal)
<b>8. Beverages</b>		
Tea (2 tsp sugar + 50 ml toned milk)	1 cup	75
Coffee (2 tsp sugar + 100 ml)	1 cup	110
Cow's milk (2 tsp sugar)	1 cup	180
Buffalo's milk (2 tsp sugar)	1 cup	320
Lassi (2 tsp sugar)	1 cup/glass (200 ml)	110
Squash	1 cup/glass	75
Syrups (Sharabats)	1 cup/glass	200
Cold drinks	1 bottle (200 ml)	150
Fresh lime juice	1 glass	60

**Ques. - What are the points to ponder in regard with healthy and positive food concepts and cooking practices?**

**Ans.**

- Avoid food faddism and discard erroneous food beliefs.
- Do not wash food grains repeatedly before cooking.
- Do not wash vegetables after cutting.
- Do not soak the cut vegetables in water.
- Do not discard the excess water left over after cooking. Use only sufficient water for cooking.
- Cook foods in vessels covered with lids.
- Prefer pressure/steam cooking to deep frying/roasting.
- Encourage consumption of sprouted/fermented foods.
- Avoid use of baking soda while cooking pulses and vegetables.
- Do not reheat the left over oil repeatedly.
- Cooking at high temperatures leads to destruction of nutrients and formation of harmful substances.