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**Health**

**Peeling bad**

You may be leaving out vital nutrients as you peel your food. Nutritionist Dr Nandita Shah shares more such tips to give your food a plant-based makeover

Posted On Sunday, October 04, 2009 at 12:40:30 AM

Granted, you're living in a concrete jungle where you have no control over pesticides in your baingan and adulteration of your milk. You are also too busy to bother about what you feed yourself, often rushing to grab a burger, gorge on a pizza and wash these down with a cola. Indeed, the reasons trotted out for this are many. Health foods? — Too expensive. Counting nutrients? — impractical. Organic and natural food? — not always possible in a city like Mumbai.



But the wrong diet is the root cause of all illnesses. The way out? Make small changes in your eating patterns. Don't make a 360-degree change, go one step at a time. Try to be as natural as possible, gradually include more raw foods and get rid of unhealthy eating patterns. Here are easy-to-adopt plant-based diet practices that can help ward off (and in most cases, reverse) ailments like obesity, diabetes, gastric problems etc.

**No To animal protein**



Don't pack in protein from animal sources — cheese, milk, meat, butter, eggs etc. Unlike plant-based protein sources, these take more time to digest, making you feel heavy and bloated. To make matters worse, unknowingly there is a tendency to have acidic food to help digest the protein (eg. gulping cola along with a cheesy pizza or alcohol with meat). And as is commonly known, one of the bottomlines of a good diet is to avoid acidic food (animal products, sugar, dairy, sugar and colas) and have more alkaline stuff (fruits, vegetables). Too much acid also leads to long-term thinning of the bones and lower muscle mass. Moreover, meat contains huge amount of animal fat that's a direct cause of obesity, heart diseases, cholesterol etc.

Moral of the story? If you want to avoid the afore-mentioned diseases, give your body a protein shake up with normal greens and fruits.

**Dairy can be avoided**

Have soya milk or almond milk if you can't do without your daily glass of milk. Dairy products, especially the ones available after all the processes and adulteration in cities these days, do your body no good.

**Oily fact**

You can fry onions in water. Watch your oil consumption. The best way to consume oil is through nuts and seeds rather than the refined form where all fibre is lost. Think you cannot make your sabji without a generous dollop of ghee? Here's how you do it. Add a little salt to soften the onions and fry them in a pan without oil or fat. If you feel it sticks, just sprinkle a little water. Your onions will get fried just as well.

**Change your cooking style**

Healthy, oil-free cooking might take a little longer than usual, but it's worth the wait. Begin using vegetable broth to cook your sabjis and curries. Can't do without tasty (oily) temptations like ragda patties or cutlets? Simply coat your patties in fine peanut powder and roast them. It might take a while, but the oil released from the peanuts is enough to cook them. Try it to believe it.



**Have whole foods**

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Eat only whole foods because most of the nutrients and flavour is in the skin and when you peel them, you throw away the nutrients. Ever wondered why you add sauces and masalas to spice up vegetables? It's because while peeling the skin, you are ridding it of its flavours too. If you learn to cook with whole foods, you won't feel the need to artificially flavour them with sauces. Similarly, have unpolished rice instead of white rice, atta instead of maida.

### Use water Sparingly

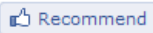

Washing vegetables, grains and fruits well is necessary but don't overdo it, else you'll lose all nutrients. Steam your veggies instead of boiling them, you'll require less water and retain nutrients too. Also, never wash vegetables after chopping them.

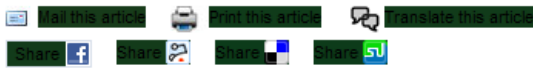
### Have fruits Separately

Do not combine fruits with a meal. Fruits digest very quickly compared to other foods, is very sugary and therefore 'ferments' in your stomach. This is fine normally, but if you eat fruit after eating a lot of other foods that digest more slowly, then the fermenting fruit sits in your stomach a lot longer and can cause bloating, gas and discomfort. Also have fruits whole, instead of juices. The calories are higher in juices and with fruits, you'll get your fibre too.

### Follow the monkey

Nature is the best teacher and among all animals, man's closest relative monkey leads the way. Ever seen a monkey peel an apple? But it certainly does so for a banana or an orange. Follow the principle in your diet too! Never peel fruits and vegetables that don't need peeling.

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