



Chapter 1

Making Right Food Choices

The road to health goes through this simple equation:

Nutrition + Health = Right Food x Better Digestive Capacity

And all this takes is making correct food choices.

Our eating habits can make or break our health. There is no doubt at all that - we are what we eat. And unfortunately, we eat what we get. Even more unfortunate the entire environment we subsist in is fashioned towards eating unhealthy food, as that is what is being made available and sold to us through high decibel and very effective marketing. This is in fact the key field in the food and nutrition space that FSSAI is working to address. Eat Right India movement is working to transform the country's food system to not just ensure availability of safe food, healthy and sustainable diets, but the programme is also bringing about a right information revolution by ensuring that correct information is reaching people across the country through its stellar initiatives. The key challenges FSSAI is seeking to address via the Eat Right India movement are:

Food is a fundamental need and a right. The fact that food is critical in shaping and determining the health and nutrition outcomes of the country is a no brainer. It is also a commodity, a product, a meal and source of nutrition which is deeply ingrained in our culture, heritage and identity. At every stage along the food value chain - primary producers, processors, buyers, packagers, distributors, regulators and consumers play a role in shaping its safety and quality, its environmental footprint and its ability to feed citizens healthily and sustainably. And this chain needs to function properly for right food to reach the end users.

Food safety is a critical link for good health and nutrition but is often neglected. In India, food-borne illnesses remain a threat to the entire population and their burden in fact is comparable to malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

That there is a strong interconnection between unsafe food and adverse health and nutrition outcomes is again well established as that results in poor absorption of nutrients from food, particularly of vitamins and minerals that impact nutritional status of a person.

India has persistently high prevalence of undernutrition with rising incidence of over-nutrition and non-communicable diseases. These are pervasive across age groups and there is need for urgent action across age groups. There is also an epidemiological shift happening from communicable to non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

Finally, the country is also facing myriad of other challenges, including water crisis, high food loss and waste, and rising ill effects due to climate change. All these need to be addressed too.

The Good Work

To address all these concerns FSSAI has expanded its focus from merely preventing food adulteration towards a more holistic approach to ensure safe and wholesome food for all citizens and has made a transition from being merely an 'enforcer' to also an 'enabler' by launching the 'Eat Right India' movement. The movement targets people across ages, gender, regions, and socio-economic groups. It brings together food-related mandates of the agriculture, health, industry and environment ministries with a 'whole of government' approach. It has forged partnerships with not only flagship programs of the country but also with professionals and other stakeholders.

The movement has three key pillars -

1 Food Safety

2 Healthy Diets

3 Sustainable Food System

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Food Safety

The focus is on ensuring personal and surrounding hygiene, maintaining hygienic and sanitary practices through the food supply chain, combating adulteration, reducing toxins and contaminants in food and controlling food hazards in processing and manufacturing processes.

Healthy Diets

The focus is on promoting diet diversity and balanced diets, eliminating toxic industrial trans fats from food, reducing consumption of salt, sugar and saturated fats and promoting large-scale fortification of staples to address micronutrient deficiencies.

Sustainable food systems

Actions under this pillar promote local and seasonal foods, prevent food loss and food waste, conserve water in food value chains, reduce use of chemicals in food production and encourage use of safe and sustainable packaging.



On occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Gandhiji, FSSAI also launched a unique initiative the 'Swasth Bharat Yatra' to spread the messages of 'Eat Right India' movement amongst masses. 'Swasth Bharat Yatra', the world's biggest cyclothon was flagged off on 16th October 2018, on the occasion of World Food Day. This yatra was one-of-a-kind Pan-India public health revolution, encouraging people to 'Eat Right' and delivering the message of 'Eat Right India' through direct outreach among citizens. It was instrumental in galvanizing the food safety network in all the states and create a sustainable culture and habit of safe and healthy diets by promoting individual awareness and collective action and strengthening institutional systems.

In addition, an amazing initiative the 'Eat Right Mela' has also been conceived to engage, excite and enable citizens to eat right through an info-tainment model. The first National Eat Right Mela was held during 14th-16th December 2018 in New Delhi in collaboration with NASVI's Street Food Festival to an overwhelming response. Since then, Eat Right Melas have been held all over India in various cities like Mumbai, Chennai and Indore and even at district level at Barpeta, Assam.

The second National Eat Right Mela was organised from 25th -29th December 2019 which was a complete food experience for the entire family. In addition to showcasing street foods from all over the country, it consisted of entertaining yet informative activities such as food quizzes, talks by dieticians and nutritionists, live cooking demonstrations by chefs, discussions by leading food experts and exhibits on healthy eating along with a host of cultural performances such as street theatre, dances. It was a huge success.



6

Simple Steps to Eat Mindfully

- 01** **Keep Gaps:** Try to eat all your meals within a consistent 10-hour window, and fast for the remaining hours of the 24 hours day. This helps protect from NCD's like Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and inflammatory disorders.

- 02** **Hydrate well:** Very often what you perceive as hunger is only dehydration. So, before you pick up that cookie, have some water first. Enough water will keep all body systems chugging along.

- 03** **Chew More:** Chew your food properly. It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to respond to increased glucose levels (due to the food) and get the "I'm full" message. So if you eat at supersonic speed, you'll end up eating much more than you should. So, to time it right, follow the 20:20 rule. Try chewing each mouthful 20 times until it becomes almost liquid. This also leads to better digestion of food.

- 04** **Just eat:** When you are eating, avoid all distractions, and just focus on your food... look at it, taste it, feel it... let your stomach extract the maximum possible nutrients. Otherwise the food you are eating at that time is as good as 'wasted' if your body's energies are concentrated elsewhere as the nutrient absorption gets short-changed extensively.

- 05** **Know your portions:** Practice portion control consciously. Your portion could decide just how many extra calories you are wolfing down on a daily basis. When portion size of a dish is too large, share your dish.

- 06** **Eat a happy diet:** What you eat has the power to make you feel good or really bad as food affects our emotions directly. Science is clear that when you eat food that you don't enjoy, the nutrient absorption is very low. So, try to eat healthy foods in a way they make you happy.

