

Ready kitchen ammunition

THE Indian way of nutrition offers a combination of power packed foods that not only improve immunity but also ensures 'Sarvagunn Sampann' health. Kavita Devgan, nutrition expert, Tata Nutrikorner, suggests one should integrate the following five proven spices to your diet to help build immunity and ward off common infections:

TURMERIC: Is there anything turmeric cannot do? Seems not. Turmeric is a strong flu-fighter and has anti-inflammatory properties which act as immunity enhancers and can help the body ward off viral infections. So add it to all your 'tadkas' and drink 'haldi' (turmeric) milk at night. You could even make haldi-ghee-pepper-jaggery balls and eat one every day.

Tip: Just make sure that you use haldi sourced from Salem that has 3 per cent curcumin and natural oils intact.

Trend: The West is going gaga over turmeric latte, try it!

KASURI METHI (FENUGREEK): This lesser-known spice doesn't just add an amazing flavour to your dishes, but is also a wonderful source of fibre and is known to be effective in decreasing cholesterol and inflammation in the body. It keeps the digestion happy, which is essential for good immunity while keeping your blood sugar in check.

Tip: Pick superior kasuri methi sourced from Nagaur that has fewer stems.

Trend: Drink fenugreek water on an empty stomach to lose weight. This will help reduce belly fat naturally.

CORIANDER POWDER: Dhania powder is very good for relieving flatulence and aiding better digestion of food by facilitating better bowel movement. This is probably why it has been used extensively in our cooking since ancient times. Good gut health not only protects against cold and virus but aids in faster recovery from an infection.

Tip: Coriander powder from the Kumbhraj region of Madhya Pradesh is very good.

GARAM MASALA: This blend of ground whole spices is full of antioxidants which help in boosting digestion and fighting inflammation in the body; thus keeping our immunity optimum. Plus it is full of antioxidants and also fights bloating and flatulence.

Tip: Make sure you source garam masala that has all these spices in it: coriander, turmeric, chilli, fennel, black pepper, cumin, salt, ginger powder, mustard, green chilli powder, fenugreek, cinnamon, coriander, cloves, allspice, asafoetida, cardamom and mace.

BLACK PEPPER: Black pepper is both an antioxidant and an antibacterial agent. It contributes to overall wellness tremendously. It also has vitamin C, which naturally boosts immunity, and works as an excellent antibiotic.

Tip: Stop compromising on the quality of spices that you buy, only buy pepper which comes with the backing of a brand you can trust.

For a 'Sampann' monsoon diet

Instead of relying on highly processed lentils that are stripped of nutrients, opt for branded unpolished dals to score more fibre, protein and antioxidants and definitely eat two servings of lentils every day. Do not fall for fads. Instead trust the Indian way of nutrition. Cut down on your sugar intake drastically. It has no nutrients, no protein, no healthy fats, and no enzymes. It is just empty calories that can have a disastrous effect on our immune system — IANS

Many skin-lightening creams commonly contain high doses of steroids and other toxic compounds, which cause damage your health in the long run

An unfair treatment

DR VIKAS SHARMA

DISCRIMINATION on the basis of skin colour as practiced in the modern glamorous world is, perhaps, the most visible form of racism. The issue, which came to light recently after protests around #BlackLivesMatter, became so discomforting that some brands, which have, so far, associated fairness with marriage, career and success in their advertisements, had to remove the word 'fair' from their brand name. However, will renaming a fairness cream stop this discrimination, especially when obsession for fair skin goes beyond age, caste, religion, and social status.

The craze with getting fairer can be judged from the fact that skin-lightening or "fairness" creams are big business in India. Skin-whitening products are particularly popular in Asian countries like India. This desire is exploited with advertisements of fairness creams, which allure youngsters, both men as well as women, with promises of miraculous results.

Products promising to lighten the face, body and armpits are available all across the country, with skin-whitening pills and diet supplements claiming to pick up where the cosmetics leave off. India's skin lightening industry, which is growing at 18 per cent per year and is expected to reach \$1bn this year, boasts of a plethora of skin whitening creams, lotions, whitening face cleansers, shower gels, and even genital washes that claim to lighten the surrounding skin.

There are many skin-whitening products available in the market, and one should not get carried away by the promising results claimed in commercials.

Hyperpigmentation

When it comes to conditions where a person with fairer complexion has turned dark, determining the cause of the skin darkening (hyper-pigmentation) is important in selecting the best approach for treatment. Getting a proper diagnosis of the pigmentation disorder by a dermatologist before undergoing a skin lightening treatment is of paramount importance. The causes of hyperpigmentation may include genetic, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, drugs, photosensitising agents, ultraviolet light, electromagnetic radiations or systemic disease (e.g. Addison disease, liver disease, pituitary tumors). In order to adequately treat the sudden or gradual skin darkening, the causative agent needs to be determined so a specific dermatological diagnosis is paramount.

Skin lightening

The specific skin-whitening treatment can help

THE SIDE EFFECTS

The common side-effects of skin-lightening cosmetics include both cutaneous and extra-cutaneous effects. All skin-lightening agents and procedures can be harmful unless done under the supervision of dermatologists. So exercise caution before starting such treatments. Non-prescription creams that claim to bleach or lighten your skin can be harmful as these can result in:

- Thinning of skin
- Uneven colour loss, leading to a blotchy appearance
- Redness
- Excessive facial hair growth
- Intense irritation
- Contact dermatitis



Getting fairer faster can end up making your skin look bad. ISTOCK

lighten a tan, fade scars, and alleviate dark patches on the skin and is done for specific hyper-pigmented disorders.

Topical skin lightening creams and lotions often contain chemical agents like hydroquinone, azelaic acid and kojic acid. Plant extracts that can help in skin lightening when applied topically include licorice extract and arbutin. Oral supplements that help in skin lightening include glutathione, grape seed extract, vitamin C. There is also a small amount of research showing that oral supplements of pomegranate extract, pine bark extract and ellagic-acid can inhibit melanin production.

Unfortunately, many skin-lightening creams contain illegal compounds that can damage your health, the most common compounds being

high-dose steroids. Hydroquinone is a strong inhibitor of melanin production. Its higher concentrations have been banned in some European countries because of fears of a cancer risk.

Hydroquinone can be a skin irritant, particularly in higher concentrations of 4 per cent or greater, and predictably when combined with tretinoin. Fairness creams give you a pleasant picture of making your skin white over a period of time, but this comes with consequences. Getting fairer faster can end up making your skin look bad in the long run. Among the toxic components, heavy metals like mercury, arsenic, lead, cobalt, cadmium, nickel and chromium are some of the major ingredients. Mercury salt is a commonly added ingredient as fairness agent.

— The writer is chief consultant dermatologist, National Skin Hospital, Mansa Devi Complex

Keep a watch on your eye

DR IRA CHOPRA

CONJUNCTIVITIS, a common eye infection in monsoon, causes inflammation or infection of the transparent membrane, known as conjunctiva, which lines the eyelid and covers the white part of the eyeball. The small blood vessels in the conjunctiva become more visible when these are inflamed and cause the whites of eyes to appear reddish or pink. As a result, conjunctivitis is also known as 'pink eye'. In the wake of the pandemic, some studies have indicated that conjunctivitis can well be a symptom of coronavirus as the virus may enter the human host through eyes as well. Conjunctivitis or pink eye has been found as an atypical symptom.

In humans, acute conjunctivitis is the only ophthalmic manifestation found in studies in the past few months. The eyes are an important point of entry for respiratory viruses, including coronaviruses. The initial cases in China were detected by an ophthalmologist treating eye infections.

Conjunctivitis is common in monsoon and an asymptomatic patient or a patient in incubation can transmit the disease through tears or discharge. Lack of wearing eye protection can infect the person — such absence was associated with an increased risk of SARS coronavirus transmission from infected patients to healthcare workers during outbreak of the disease in 2003 in Toronto. Studies published show that conjunctivitis can be the only sign and symptom

Conjunctivitis can well be a symptom of Covid infection as the virus can enter the human host through eyes as well

of active Covid-19 infection without the other general symptoms of fever, dry cough or respiratory symptoms.

In India, however, such cases are still rare. Since March, at least 10 patients in Hyderabad, who were treated for severe coronavirus also had an eye infection. Doctors agree that conjunctival infection is not an absolute symptom of Covid-19 but it has manifested in some patients with high viral load.

Maintain eye hygiene

When a patient of coronavirus, even if he or she is asymptomatic, speaks or coughs or sneezes, droplets can emanate and spread diseases. Maintaining eye hygiene and social distancing are the only way to prevent a Covid-19 infection through eyes or ocular discharge. Those who wear contact lenses should use glasses during the pandemic and main-

tain eye hygiene — wash your hand with soap and water and then wash your eyes with plain water, repeat this frequently. Use medicated eye drops prescribed to you. It is also important to avoid straining eyes — avoid looking at laptop or any screen continuously and try to take 10 minutes break every hour, this will reduce tendency to rub eyes. Take a walk around and look at trees. Take care of diet — include spinach, apricots, sweet potatoes, fish, as well as Vitamin C, calcium and zinc. Doctors treating patients with eye conditions must use face shield and PPE to prevent chances of infection.

Take care

Here are some generic protective measures recommended by WHO:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds or more. Wash your hands specially before eating, after using the restroom, sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose. If you can't get to a sink, use a hand sanitiser with at least 60 per cent alcohol.
- If you cough or sneeze, cover your face with your elbow or a tissue. If using a tissue, throw it away promptly. Then go wash your hands.
- Regularly disinfect commonly touched surfaces and items in your house such as doorknobs, elevator buttons and countertops.
- Seek medical help if you have a fever, cough, shortness of breath or red eye.

— The writer is consultant ophthalmologist, Columbia Asia Hospital, Gurugram

CAPTION CONTEST 1266

MUKESH AGGARWAL



Entries are invited to suggest a caption for the above photograph. The caption should only be in English, witty and not exceeding 10 words, and reach Spectrum, The Tribune, Chandigarh, 160030, by Thursday. The best five captions will be published and

awarded ₹300, ₹250, ₹200, ₹150 and ₹100, respectively. Each caption must be accompanied by a clipping of the caption contest and its number. Photocopies of the caption photo will not be accepted. Please mention the pin code in your address.

You have a camera or a phone camera? Click and send us a picture for the caption contest. The selected picture will be used for Caption Contest. Mail the high resolution picture (jpg format) at captionpics@tribunemail.com

Selected entries for Caption Contest 1265

- July 19 issue (see photo)
- **Suspended till further orders** — Jeevan Dhiman, Nalagarh
- **Orchestrating further move** — Raj Kumar Kapoor, Ropar
- **Self isolation** — Pritam Singh 'Nagi', Yamunanagar
- **Packer and (re)mover** — Ravi Kant Jain, Shimla
- **Hopes@skynet.com** — Shashank Parmar, Panchkula

