THE RISING TIDE OF OBESITY IN INDIA: HOW WE CAN FIGHT BACK

WORLD OBESITY DAY
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For long, obesity was regarded as a Western problem. But over the years it has become a major health concern in India too. Fast-changing lifestyles, love for deep-fried snacks and increasing screen time is making more and more Indians struggle with weight issues. But what is significant is that obesity is not merely about appearance – it impacts health adversely as well. In fact, it substantially increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease and even mental health issues.

Why is Obesity on the Rise?

Several factors contribute to the growing obesity problem in India:

- **Unhealthy Eating Habits –** Traditionally Indians used to have healthy food filled with fibre-rich grains and home-cooked meals. But fast food and processed snacks has ensured that excess calories are imbibed without proper nutrition.

- **Lack of Physical Activity –** Advances in technology have made us all sedentary with a large part of our time spent sitting - hether at work, on our phones or watching TV. Reduced physical movement accelerates obesity.

- **Stress and Sleep Issues –** Irregular sleep and high stress affect our metabolism, leading to weight gain.

- **Urbanisation and Economic Growth –** Rising incomes have also had an effect as people eat out more, choosing high-calorie, oily and sugary foods over healthier home-cooked options.

Measures to beat obesity

While obesity is a real matter of concern, the good news is that it can be prevented and managed effectively through some lifestyle changes. These include the following:

1. Adoption of healthier Eating Habits

- Include more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and proteins in daily meals.
- Reduce sugar and processed food intake. Swap

sugary drinks with water or homemade juices.
- Practice portion control - overeating, even healthy food, can lead to weight gain.

2. Staying Active

- One should exercise at least 30 minutes daily—walking, yoga, gym workouts or even dancing
- Avoid sitting for long hours; take breaks to stretch or walk around.

3. Prioritisation of Mental Health

Staying mentally healthy is important to beat obesity. Stress can lead to emotional eating. Stress needs to be reduced by practicing meditation, spending time with family or engaging in hobbies. One should also get 7-8 hours of quality sleep as poor sleep can contribute to weight gain.

4. Spreading Awareness

- Schools and workplaces can help spread awareness by promoting healthy habits, encouraging nutritious meals and physical activities.
- Government initiatives, such as regulating junk food advertisements and improving urban spaces for exercise, can play a significant role.

It's true that obesity in India is a growing concern, but fortunately small changes can make a big difference. Healthier choices, physical activity and awareness can reduce the incidence of obesity and ensure a healthier future.