

# Business Standard

## Eat Right India: Reducing the Escalating Burden of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)

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India is in the midst of an epidemiological transition, whereby infectious, maternal, and nutritional diseases exist in conjunction with noncommunicable chronic illnesses. India ranks at 130 out of 183 countries in the United Nation's Human Development Index, which is worrying in light of the growing threat of NCDs to health in India.

The recently published Global Burden of Diseases report indicates ischemic heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, stroke, asthma, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease have seen a 49.8 percent, 39.4 percent, 37.1 percent, 6.2 percent, 53.8 percent, 35.9 percent increase, respectively, since 2007 to 2017. The report also notes these are among the top 10 causes of death in India in 2017.

The projected cumulative loss of national income for India due to NCD mortality from 2006 to 2015 is expected to be USD 237 billion. By 2030, this productivity loss is expected to equate to 17.9 million years of lost human life. By 2020, projections indicate that NCDs will account for 75 percent of all deaths.

Healthy eating should be about positive choices made with the understanding that what you put on your plate has a direct correlation to your health. In a recent interaction with Shri Pawan Kumar Agarwal, CEO, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), he said, "Alarmed by the increase in lifestyle diseases, we at FSSAI launched the Eat Right India campaign with an aim to empower citizens by improving their health and well-being. It is built in two broad pillars of Eat Healthy and Eat Right; it is a collective effort to make both the demand supply-side interventions through the engagement of key stakeholders. We welcome this forward-looking participation from chambers like Forum of Indian Food importers (FIFI) and their willingness to be a part of this nationwide public awareness campaign."

Mr. Amit Lohani, Founder Director, Forum of Indian Food Importers (FIFI), stated that FSSAI, through its Eat Right India movement, has undertaken a herculean task of engaging with the Indian consumers to eat safe, healthy, and fortified food; in addition to reducing food waste. Having a healthy plate is one of the most important decisions for all of us. It is also

quintessential that FIFl as a [forum](#) support FSSAI in this cause and will request Government to ensure that all the required nutrient-rich components of a balanced diet - from healthful nuts to fresh fruits - should be made available to Indian citizens at an affordable price during the counter-season to the Indian production cycle.

## The Way Forward

Nutritious food is essential to expanding human capital and freedom. Unfortunately, food has become the primary reason behind many NCDs in India. Junk food, though not the singular cause, is a prominent reason for the growing NCD health menace. We should aim for a [food plate](#) that illustrates the five [food groups](#) that are building blocks for inclusive development not only to children but to all age brackets in the social-economic strata.

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables! Vegetables are the major source of many nutrients, which the human body requires, like fiber, folic acid, potassium, vitamins A, E, and C, and several others. Vegetables not only help us maintain healthy blood pressure, but the dietary fiber in vegetables also helps lower the risk of heart ailments. Apart from green, you can add a perfect shade of orange with citrus fruits; add shares of red with apples, cranberries, and pomegranates; and blue with blueberries. A number of these fruits have been recognized as great sources of vitamins and minerals and for their role as antioxidants in the body. Growing issues related to women's health and increased [urinary tract infection](#) (UTI) cases are also becoming a cause of concern.

Based on the results from various studies, supporting the daily consumption of [cranberry products](#) can reduce the likelihood of developing UTIs. Cranberries contain polyphenol compounds that protect the body from E. coli, the most common bacteria causing UTIs. Fruits like apples are not only good for weight loss; medical practitioners have also attributed apples to lowering the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and [asthma](#). Citrus fruits are a known source of vitamin C and also contain a rich list of essential nutrients. The [average energy value](#) of fresh citrus, like a medium orange, is 60 to 80 kilocalories, which can be highly beneficial for curbing [obesity](#).

The healthy proteins in meat, beans, and nuts function as building blocks for bones, muscles, skin, and blood; these proteins are also building blocks for enzymes and hormones. Nuts, like walnuts, almonds, pecans, and pistachios are excellent sources of essential fatty acids and vitamin E. Dried beans and peas are also good sources of protein. Meat and poultry, too, are nutritive and cost-effective sources of protein and other important nutrients.

Milk and [dairy food items](#) serve as a rich source of calcium, vitamin D, protein, and other essential nutrients like phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, and vitamins A, B12, and riboflavin. A diet rich in protein and vitamin D contributes to bone health and has a range of

other health benefits. Fiber-rich foods, like whole grains, when included as part of a daily diet reduce the risk of [heart disease](#) and help manage weight, as fiber-rich foods have a low glycemic index (GI). The smaller the GI number in food, the less negative impact that food has on your blood sugar. Oils contain the required essential fatty acids; thus, oils, such as those derived from olive, canola, and soybeans are recommended to be consumed in moderation.

Eating healthy cannot be done in isolation and beverages are known to complement your routine diet. Some beverages are considered as functional as foods and are a source of vital nutrients and antioxidants.