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Food safety dept, IMA to launch awareness campaign

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Thiruvananthapuram: When comprehensive national nutrition survey was released last month, Kerala celebrated its achievements in key health indicators for children. But, it also pointed out that Kerala was leading in cases of adolescents with pre-diabetic condition. As per the survey, 32.2% of children (aged between 10 and 19) had a pre-diabetic condition. While one in 10 adolescents have pre-diabetic condition at the national-level, three in 10 adolescents in Kerala are likely to develop diabetes in coming years. In the five to nine age group, 18.7% have a pre-diabetic condition. Alarming, the average age of diabetes was coming down.

If the prevalence of high fasting plasma glucose is between 100mg and 126 mg/dl, it indicates a pre-diabetic condition. The survey noted that prevalence of high total cholesterol was 15% among children aged five to nine years and 13.9% among those aged 10-19 years. Keeping these in mind, food safety department and Indian Medical Association (IMA) are closely working on creating awareness on safe food practices among students.

The department had recently met Network of Professionals of Food & Nutrition to formulate a strategy to launch a campaign on safe and nutritious food in educational institutions in Kerala. It also convened a meeting of 12 principals from Thiruvananthapuram, where a safe and nutritious campaign will be launched on a pilot basis.

Nodal food safety officer Reshmi Rajan said that the department – in association with IMA, IT mission and state institute of educational technology – is planning to implement the programme in 10,000 schools. “Initially, we will implement it in 12 schools in the capital. A behaviour change must be introduced not just among students, but parents too. We should suggest healthy alternatives. If best eating practices can be introduced, some institutions can be declared as eat-right schools,” she said.

IMA’s national convener of food safety initiative Dr Sreejith N Kumar said Kerala’s problem is overnutrition, while other states are grappling with malnutrition. “There are enough

studies which prove that pre-diabetic condition or even diabetics, to an extent, can be reversed with right eating habits. Hence, IMA began an awareness campaign on safe eating practices and healthy food plate. We have decided to give awareness to doctors on lifestyle diseases among kids," he said.

IMA's healthy plate model say that half of the contents should be vegetables, while the other half should contain grains and proteins.