Strong Immunity Key for Fighting Covid-19, Says Health Min Harsh Vardhan

File photo of Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

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Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday said people with poor immunity are more vulnerable to contracting coronavirus infections and stressed on the need to boost the immune system by eating right and safe food.

Speaking at the virtual launch of the 'Eat Right India Challenge' initiative by food safety regulator FSSAI, the Minister said a strong immune system is not only important for fighting coronavirus but also diseases like tuberculosis.

"It is rightly said that food plays an important role in building immunity. Today those people are getting more infected by COVID-19 whose immunity is not strong," he said.

People who don't focus on their food have many deficiencies, that weaken their immune system, he said, and emphasised on the need to eat right and safe food.

"As a doctor, I feel if a person focuses on his food and exercise, he can save himself from diseases," he added.

Asserting that more awareness needs to be created among people about diet, the Minister said it is because about 52 per cent deaths in India are due to non-communicable diseases like hypertension and diabetes.

Also, the country has 196 million people in chronic hunger, 500 million with micro-nutrient deficiency, 180 million with obesity besides 100 million cases of food borne diseases, he added.

As per the Health Ministry data, there were 27.67 lakh COVID-19 cases as on Wednesday in the country.

On the 'Eat Right India Challenge', the Minister said it is a good initiative to instill a sense of competition among cities and districts to strengthen regulatory compliance.

"But in the name of this initiative, small outlets should not be harassed... Efforts should be made to involve them and encourage them to participate," he said.

Under the year-long initiative, the first 150 cities and districts that register on a first-cum-first service basis will be eligible for seed funding for the challenge. Already 197 districts/cities from 23 states have registered.

The selected districts and cities have to do mandatory activities like registration, licensing, surveillance and enforcement drive, promote the eat right food environment besides changing food choices and other innovative activities.

Minister of State for Health Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO Arun Singhal and Chairperson Rita Teaotia were present at the virtual event.