



**Inoshi Sharma,**

Director, Social and Behaviour Change Division (SBCD), FSSAI

## Maximize health by minimizing salt, sugar and fat

*FSSAI is committed to limit the fat, sugar and salt content in foods, and eliminate Trans Fatty Acids (TFAs), and is actively working with industry, associations, scientists and researchers as well as public health institutes to achieve these objectives.*

It is increasingly becoming apparent that high consumption of salt, sugar and fat is one of the prime reasons behind the risk of developing lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, etc.

Not all fats are bad. Unsaturated fats found in vegetable oils, seeds, nuts, avocado are in fact essential for good health. However, saturated fats and trans fats found in highly processed foods, bakery products, commercially fried foods and desserts are harmful for health. In fact, trans-fats are especially dangerous because they are the worst kind of fats. They increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Similarly, added sugar, particularly refined white sugar is also bad for health. It adds only extra calories without providing any nutrients. Moreover, it is highly addictive. Found in sweets, desserts and sweetened beverages, it can really load up the calories and increase the risk of obesity, diabetes and heart diseases.

Last but not the least, high amounts of sodium can be dangerous for health. It can increase the risk of hypertension, which is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. Sodium is present in salt. Therefore, it is important to limit the intake of salt to maximum 5 gm per person per day, as recommended by the World Health Organization.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched 'Eat Right India' Movement which is a multi-sectoral effort to nudge citizens to eat right. One of its key initiatives is focused on reducing intake of salt, sugar, fat, phasing-out trans-fats from our diets. On one side, through the regulatory measures we are updating our regulations to limit the fat, sugar and salt content in foods, and eliminate Trans Fatty Acids (TFAs), while on the other

side, through the Eat Right initiative and awareness programmes, we are trying to generate awareness among consumers to limit the consumption of foods containing high levels of fat, sugar and salt. FSSAI is committed to trans-fat elimination from food supply chain by 2022 and is actively working with industry, associations, scientists and researchers as well as public health institutes to bring the best technology as well as share global experiences to eliminate trans fat from the food supply chain.

To kick-start and popularize the movement, a powerful infotainment campaign through a short video starring National Award winning actor Rajkumar Rao was launched with a simple yet memorable tagline 'Aaj Se, Thoda Kam'. As the main face of the campaign, Rao officially launched the 'The Eat Right Movement' on July 10, 2018 in Mumbai and offered his support to spread the message of '#Aaj Se Thoda Kam' across possible formats.

Endorsing the Eat Right India Movement, Rajkumar Rao suggests all his fans to take small steps. In the words of Rao, "Health is a matter of the head winning over the heart. While our heart wants tasty treats, our head can think of ways to control or avoid these indulgent tendencies through simple behaviour change strategies. The head understands what's at stake because ultimately these tasty treats can make us so ill that we might have to give them up altogether. He goes on to recommend gradually reducing salt, sugar and fat in the daily diet by following the mantra - Aaj Se Thoda Kam."

Efforts are being made on both demand and supply side. On the demand side, the 'Eat Right India' movement focuses on empowering citizens to make the right food



## To do list to reduce intake of salt, sugar & fat

### SALT

Salt is the main source of sodium in our diet. Sodium consumption above WHO recommended limit of 5g a day predisposes an individual to heart problems.

- Instead of sprinkling salt on salad, cut fruits, cooked vegetables or curd, enjoy their natural taste.
- Reduce Salt quantity in cooking. From lesser to least.
- Soy sauce, salad dressings, ketchup, pickles, and papads also has Sodium. Use these foods moderately in your daily diet.
- Baking soda, baking powder, and monosodium glutamate (MSG) also contains high sodium: Avoid using these in your daily cooking.
- Do not add salt in dough for chapati or rice.

### SUGAR

Sugar provides only calories and no other nutrient to our body. High intake of sugar is a risk factor for obesity and predisposes the individual to diabetes and other diseases.

- Prefer using naturally sweet ingredients than refined sugars.
- Restrict foods such as cakes, pastries, confectionery and sweets as they often have high amounts of fat, sugar, or salt, prepared with refined cereals.
- Limit the consumption of foods and drinks

containing high amounts of sugars (e.g. sugar-sweetened beverages, sugary snacks, etc).

- Prefer whole fruits instead of fruit juices. Eat a piece of fresh fruit.
- Do not overindulge in sugar-preserved foods like jams, jellies and marmalades.

### FAT

Excess of fat intake is a risk factor for obesity and diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular ailments etc.

- While cooking, prefer boiling, steaming, roasting, grilling or baking rather than frying.
- Measure cooking oil with a spoon rather than pouring freely from the bottle, or use spray for oil.
- Restrict your intake of bakery foods or processed foods.
- In your routine cooking, use fats and oils in moderation and consume varieties of foods.

### TRANS FATS

These are bad fats which should be completely avoided.

- Avoid using Vanaspati, bakery shortenings, margarine etc as they are the major sources of trans fats.
- Limit consumption of bakery products, fried foods to avoid consumption of trans fats.
- Do not repeatedly re-heat the oil or re-use the same oil for frying as it can lead to formation of trans fats.

choices. On the supply side, it nudges food businesses to reformulate their products, provide better nutritional information to consumers and make investments in healthy food. FSSAI has also initiated the Eat Right awards to recognize the contribution of food companies who are working tirelessly to reformulate their products for healthier options.

To create awareness about the adverse health effects of trans fat, FSSAI launched another campaign 'Heart Attack Rewind'; a 30 second Trans Fat Public Service Announcement (PSA). FSSAI is aggressively working towards bringing down the trans fat content in fats and oils from the current level of not more than 5 per cent by weight in four categories of fats and oils (vanaspati, bakery shortening, bakery and industrial margarine and interesterified vegetable fat) to not more than 2 per cent by weight of all fats and oils by January 2022; a year ahead of WHO's target. Thus moving closer to its motto "Achieving Freedom from Tarns Fat; India @75".

Further, FSSAI has recently released Trans Fat free logo in July, 2019 to encourage food establishments like bakeries, sweet shops and other catering establishments to use healthier fat/oil options, thereby reducing the trans fat content in the foods. The food establishments which uses trans-fat free fats/oil and do not have industrial trans-fat more than 0.2g per 100 g of the food, in compliance with the regulation on Claims and Advertisements, 2018 can voluntarily display 'Trans Fat Free' logo in their outlets and on their food products.

To further enhance the effectiveness of the message 'Aaj Se ThodaKam' and '+F Symbol', FSSAI also launched an online campaign with Ace Cricketer and Indian Cricket term caption Shri Virat Kohli. Kohli joined this movement by urging citizens to follow the simple "Plus-Minus" formula. In the words of Kohli, "We need to "minus" or minimize salt, sugar and fat and "plus" or add fortified foods.... Eat Right, Stay Fit....Tabhi India, Super Hit." **NS**