

Is India falling short on nutrition?

By Sandeep Verma

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This article is authored by Sandeep Verma, country head, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Bayer Consumer Health.



Nutrition(Photo by Pixabay)

How many times have you skipped lunch because of an important meeting? Or grabbed a burger on the way home because you are too tired to cook dinner? It happens to the best of us. As we are in a constant hustle to fulfill our aspirations and goals, we often sacrifice our well-being and quality of life while trying to race to the top. Amidst all the responsibilities, we tend to overlook or ignore overall health and dietary needs. Also, as we balance family responsibilities such as caring for the elderly and children with work, it leaves us with little time for meal planning. Easy availability of convenience food helps us tide over our

hunger, but the nutritional requirements of the body are not met. Convenience food especially lacks vitamins and minerals, the micronutrients that are essential for many bodily functions including immune function and energy production.

Various studies have documented the rising cases of micronutrient deficiencies which impact around two billion people globally, with nearly half living in India. According to a recent survey, 90% of doctors and nutritionists believe that the average Indian diet today meets only 70% or less of daily nutritional requirements leaving a 30% gap in nutrients. The National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau also states that the daily intake of essential nutrients such as iron, vitamin B12, calcium, and vitamins C and D consistently falls short of recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) for most people in India.

Micronutrient deficiencies have a far-reaching impact on our daily lives, but we often fail to recognise the symptoms. The fatigue that we may co-relate to overwork, or the feeling of depression could be symptoms of a micronutrient deficiency. The Supradyn Fatigue survey found that 81% of people feel their energy getting drained throughout the day. These nutritional deficiencies can also impact productivity at work. A survey shows that employees with unhealthy diets are 66% more likely to experience a drop in productivity compared to those who eat whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Awareness about the recommended daily intake (RDI) of vitamins and minerals is the first step to reduce the burden

of micronutrient deficiencies. We should encourage consultation with a nutritionist to understand if the diet is meeting the RDI of all vitamins and minerals. Initiatives that educate consumers to identify nutrient gaps are essential. For e.g. nutritional education initiatives at workplaces and schools should focus on RDI of vitamins and minerals and easy methods to calculate whether the diet is meeting the RDI. We should promote diverse diets rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and proteins. Nutritional supplements containing specific nutrients are necessary when the diet cannot provide all the required nutrients in required quantities. Once people recognise the gaps in their diet, they would be in a better position to plan their meals and use supplements whenever required to bridge the gap.

Addressing the nutrient gap requires a holistic approach that includes both balanced diet and supplementation alongside lifestyle modifications such as adequate hydration, physical activity, and mindfulness. Adequate hydration improves digestion and nutrient absorption, yet many Indians struggle to drink enough water due to hectic schedules. Regular physical activity not only boosts metabolism but also enhances the body's ability to utilise nutrients effectively. Ultimately, engaging in self-care activities for mindfulness and mental well-being helps maintain consistency in following good health practices, empowering individuals achieve their goals. By making mindful choices amidst the hustle, we can bridge the nutrient gap and build a society that thrives on both energy and well-being.

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