

Excessive eating and atherosclerosis

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Anjali Mukherjee

Unhealthy eating habits play a major role in the development of heart diseases, diabetes, etc. However, balanced nutrition helps prevent many lifestyle diseases.

What is atherosclerosis?

Atherosclerosis is a process in which the inner walls of the arteries are clogged due to cholesterol, fats, and inflammatory deposits called plaque. As plaque builds up, the artery wall gets hard and thickened. The resultant damage is different in different individuals. Plaque formation and inflammation causes narrowing of arteries due to which blood flow is hampered.

In general, people with high cholesterol, diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, smoking habits, etc. are more prone to atherosclerosis.

A few tips for a healthy heart:

- Detoxify your body by consuming raw vegetable juices such as mint coriander, tomato and coriander, capsicum and coriander, etc.
- Eat fibre-rich wholegrains such as jowar, bajra, millet (ragi)
- Eat more vegetables.
- Reduce the consumption

of non-vegetarian foods, whole milk, cheese, etc.
 • Eat healthy fats such as nuts, seeds, mustard oil, sesame seed oil, etc.
 • Avoid saturated fats found in processed foods.

Which supplements help?

Several flavonoid-rich herbs such as turmeric, and cocoa help in battling the disease, and to reduce some side effects of drugs.
Pomegranate: Its daily consumption reduces blood pressure and improves ischemia (inadequate blood supply) in patients already suffering from atherosclerosis.
Turmeric: Curcumin is the main flavonoid of the spice. It has shown powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, that help manage atherosclerosis by preventing plaque build-up in the arteries.
Cocoa: Recent studies have found that cocoa flavonoids are cardio-protective in nature—they reduce the tendency of plaque formation and increases blood flow in arteries.

There are a number of other supplements that can also help protect the heart, including white tea, green tea, blueberries, blackberries and raspberries.

WATCH WHEN YOU EAT

Eating at the wrong time can make your skin age faster, suggests a new study. Experts dig deeper into the issue and tell us how to discipline our food habits

Susan Jose

A recent research by a team of scientists from China Agricultural University, Beijing, and Guangxi Medical University, Nanning in China, and University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, and University of California, Irvine in USA, established a relation between the timings of eating and the health of your skin.

The team discovered that eating at abnormal times disrupts the genes that control the ageing of skin. "There is a concept known as time-restricted feeding (TRF), which affects a key DNA repair gene called XPA," says Dr Saurabh Shah, dermatologist, Bhatia Hospital, Tardeo.

He adds, "The researchers have found that abnormal eating habits disrupt the epidermal barrier. This disruption leads to skin's increased susceptibility to sun's harmful UV radiation; thus making the skin sustain more sun induced damage during the day."



According to Shah, a balanced Indian meal usually suffices our need for a skin-friendly diet. He recommends his improvised concept of the four-colour diet, which is as follows:

- **White:** Curd or buttermilk
- **Green:** Green leafy vegetables or salads
- **Red:** Tomatoes, papaya, etc.
- **Yellow/Brown:** Dals, lentils, pulses, etc.

He advises to have these as multiple small meals spaced at intervals of two to three hours.

Dr Rinky Kapoor, dermatologist and skin laser specialist, SL Raheja Fortis Associate Hospital, Mahim, further breaks it down. "Eating at abnormal times disrupts the biological clock of the skin, including the daytime potency of an enzyme that protects against the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation, thus, indicating that people who eat late at night may be more vulnerable to sunburn, skin ageing and skin cancer," she says.

Although the research has,

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DR RINKY KAPOOR, DERMATOLOGIST

so far, been conducted on mice, experts opine that we can learn much about adding discipline to our food habits from this. "Skin health not only depends on what we eat, but also on when we eat. By following our natural circadian rhythm and aligning our feeding time to that, we allow detoxification, healing and cell renewal, all of which are critical for the health of our skin. Around 90% of body energy is taken up by the digestive system, leaving only 20% for other organs and its processes. By allowing ourselves to enter a fasted state, we alter this 90:20 distribution directing the stomach to shut down and focus on detoxification. Skin is the largest detoxification organ and when it's allowed to effectively get rid of toxins (along with kidney, liver and lungs), we improve the health of all organs and that naturally shows on the skin," says Luke Coutinho, MD, alternative medicine and founder, Purenutrition.

FOOD HABITS THAT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE SKIN

Caffeine: Too much coffee can give rise to increase of stress hormones such as cortisol and that can lead to breakouts

Dairy: Cheese, paneer, ice creams, sweets and chocolates can increase the androgen levels in one's body which can increase the sebum secretion and lead to acne

Preserved foods: Can cause increase of insulin, which causes a lot of inflammation.

They can also break down the collagen and elastin, which causes the skin to sag

Salted food: Chips, pretzels, cheese, etc. can cause lot of water retention, and thus cause bloating and under eye puffiness

Hydration: Some people "forget to drink water". That poses serious risk to the skin and the body. Drinking enough water is necessary to flush out the bad toxins and give the skin a radiant look

Alcohol: Heavy drinking causes dehydration, which can lead to dullness, wrinkles and dry skin. It can trigger or increase severity of skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis

Smoking: Cessation of smoking will lessen the burden of oxidative damage to the body.

THE RIGHT EAT-SLEEP CYCLE

"Sound sleep for six to eight hours a day is enough for good health and a good skin. It gives the body and skin, time to repair and rejuvenate. A short nap for about half an hour in the middle of the day is also fantastic," says Kapoor. She further adds, "We feel hungry every three to five hours. So try to eat at the same time every day. Breakfast should be ideally eaten within one hour of waking up.

Consider an earlier lunch and a smaller dinner. My personal opinion is that those who follow the traditional culture of eating the last meal of the day just before sunset are doing a great favour to their skin and body."

Moreover, one should also be mindful to avoid emotional eating and eating after sunset in general. "Post sunset, not only raw food but any food which is difficult to digest should be avoided as these foods can accumulate in the digestive tract, which is inactive during the night and can disturb the sleep cycle as well. The food which is not digested will turn into fat and add on to one's weight making one obese. One can also have heart burns and irritable bowel at night," says Dr Soma Sarkar, dermatologist and medical director, Skin Inn, Bandra (W).

With inputs from Dr Pooja Thacker, nutritionist, Bhatia Hospital, Tardeo, and Karishma Chawla, nutritionist, Eat Right 24/7

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