

Fast Food Consumption and Health

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Abstract :

Fast food are readily available can be eaten with convenience any time anywhere. Consumption of fast or junk food over healthy food have risen considerably. Fast foods have serious health complications. Fast food has become integral part of diet in all sections of society, mainly in children, college, university students. In spite of the fact that a significant proportion of population are aware about adverse effects and consequences of fast food consumption.

Fast food refers to the food that can be prepared and served quickly. Fast food culture is an emerging trend among the younger generation in India. Professionals living in the city away from family also prefer to have fast food rather than making it by own. Preparation for cooking food needs purchasing and processing of food which is tiring and time consuming affair. As far as cost effectiveness is concerned, preparing food in kitchen for individual or nuclear family is more expensive.

Nuclear families where both husband and wife are in job, after hectic schedule it is nice to have fast food in dinner. Working parents have less time and energy for meal preparation at home. It is easy to serve fast food to their children.

Fast food term is often used as junk food. Technically they are quite different. Fast food are ready to eat alternatives to home cooked food which are sold in a restaurant or store which are rapidly prepared and quickly served in a packaged form for take away. Like pizza, Burgers Pattie etc. Most of the Junk food are fast food and served fast but all food are not Junk food. Junk food are with high Energy sugar salt and fat content like Chocolates, ice-cream, soft drinks, Burgers pizza.

Major health implications of fast food.

Harvard Nutrition expert has denounced it as the 'biggest food processing disaster in US'

Franklin has rightly said "I saw a few die of hunger, of eating a hundred thousand.

Diabetes, Obesity, High level of cholesterol, Blood Pressure, Anemia, Low immunity, Osteoporosis, Dental Carries are major health issues related to fast food consumption.

Harmful Ingredients in fast food

Trans fat : It boosts the bad LDL level cholesterol and decrease good HD cholesterol in body. It is twice as dangerous as saturated fat for the heart. Hydrogenated oil used in

Indian cooking are rich in trans fat. Now it has been replaced by refined vegetable oil. Trans fat content in Indian fast food are far higher than western foods like Indian food like Bhatara, Paratha, Puri contains higher amount of trans fat.

High Fructose Corn Syrup : Corn sugar is cheap substitute for sugar. It can cause Heart disease, Cancer, and can weak immune system. It may deplete the reserves of Chromium essential for healthy level of Cholesterol, insulin and blood sugar.

Monosodium Glutamate : it is a flavor enhancer commonly known as MSG, used in Chinese food, canned vegetables, soups, and processed meals .The adverse reaction of MSG containing food are headache, flushing, sweating, facial pressure, numbness, rapid fluttering, heartbeats, chest pain nausea and weakness.

Salt : High Salt content in processed food raised blood volume and body retains fluid to dilute sodium. Veins and arteries constrict and blood pressure is raised resulting heart to work harder.

Enriched refined flours : This flour is made from endosperm part of cereal. The outer layer of cereal known as bran is removed before milling to process refined flour. Most of the vitamin and minerals fibers present in bran is removed while milling. Food made with refined flours cause digestion upsets and malnutrition. Fiber naturally control diabetes and cholesterol by reducing Blood glucose level and cholesterol level as it absorb and excrete in feces.

Aspartame : it is a sugar substitute used in diet products soft drinks. it causes dizziness, loss of equilibrium ,severe muscle ache and high blood pressure.

FAST FOOD CONSUMPTION IN CHILDREN

Fast food are available in school canteens and moreover on certain occasion like sports day or annual function some of fast food company sponsor programmes and thus promote fast food consumption. Television advertisement has an important role in promoting unhealthy dietary practice among children. Fast food centre near household, school, coaching centre also predispose to increase consumption.

A positive co-relation of increased fast food consumption skipped breakfast and increased BMI found among adolescents. Study conducted in Hyderabad shows children from high socio economic status preferred fast food to traditional foods despite better nutrition knowledge. Food outside the home is also devaluation of cooking skills.

India is on top ten list o frequent fast food eaters. 70 percent of urban Indians consume food from take away restaurants once a month or more times. The survey by ASSOCHAM claims 86 percent of the families preferred fast food are nuclear family. On line survey from A.C. Neilsen (A leading market research firm) shows urban India acquiring amore global palette have catalyzed fast food consumption.

Identifying the drivers for preference of one brand of take away food over another the survey results indicate that 66 percent Indians consider hygiene and cleanliness as most important consideration for selection.

Is fast food bad : Food is never bad. It should not be taken in regular basis as it contains many harmful ingredients and also lacks many of nutrients. Therefore with fast food moderation is important and make healthier choices. Choose food that is boiled, steamed or grilled. One can choose soups that are not creamy.

Some of the school in India have banned the sale of junk food in the school cafeteria .Akshaya patra foundation NGO in India has introduced school mid day meal programme.

Parents and educators should be aware and should be well equipped to pass their knowledge to restrict fast food habits in children.

Strategies to reduce fast food trend :

Nutritional value menu card should be introduced in fast food centers. Always purchase small portion never supersize anything. Never fall for the attractive deals like pizza with free coke or value box pay for one liter and get on other free of ice cream. If deal offer is placed share it with others to reduce consumption. Children should be aware that too much of good thing is also bad, eating too much of any kind of food can lead to weight gain. Swapping of choices can also reduce the harmful effects like one can have salad instead of fries, water low fat milk, diet sodas instead of regular soft drinks can be used.

Conclusion

It is concluded that fast food are cheaper tastier time and energy saver food. Which also gives "feel good" feeling as it contains lots of sugar and fat, at the same time it has many health hazards.

Fast food has become an important part of dietary menu most children and adolescents Children are lured by convincing market strategies and peer pressure. It can be reduced by implementation of laws to regulate the marketing of food. Promotion of healthy eating habits and education about junk food needs to be strengthened.

Some changes in fast food can reduce the harmful effects like use light toppings, avoid creamy dressing use mustard or ketchup instead of mayonnaise, add vegetables instead of meat try sandwiches with vegetables instead of cheese and bacon. Extra salt addition should be avoided.

Refernces

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