

- Avoid salt rich foods like papads, pickles, salted namkeens/savouries, etc. Those with family history of high blood pressure should especially reduce their daily salt consumption.
- Reduce the consumption of sugar rich foods. Those with family history of diabetes should be careful of the amount and type of food to be consumed.
- Restrict intake of red meat like mutton, liver, etc. and consume lean meats like chicken, fish, etc.
- Use vegetable oils like mustard oil, groundnut oil, soyabean oil, etc. for cooking. In practice, it is best to use a mixture of oils.
- Reduce the consumption of deep fried foods - samosa, vadas, kachori, pakoras, etc.
- Roadside vendors who sell fried foods, heat the same oil over and over again, The oil they use can lead to blocking/clogging of blood vessels and possibly to a heart attack and other Non-Communicable Diseases.
- Drink plenty of water, at least 8-10 glasses of water daily. Beverages like water, buttermilk, lassi, coconut water, should be consumed instead of bottled soft drinks and readymade fruit juices.

Poverty as an underlying cause for unhealthy food choices

Most information that is available through advertisements and newspapers, highlight that unhealthy foods (foods particularly rich in fats, sugars and salt). are the reasons for causing NCDs. They also urge people to eat more fruits, nuts and vegetables, eat more often, and use healthy oils in their cooking.

These messages assume that such healthy foods are easily available to everyone, and that people have the time and money to purchase and prepare healthy foods.

However, poor people are unable to afford such dietary items on a regular basis.. Poor people tend to eat larger quantities of foods that are cheap but do not have much nutritional value. For instance, you will find people eating five or six chapattis, but with hardly any vegetables or only watery dal. Among rice eating communities, poor people cannot afford pulses and vegetables so they may eat a large quantity of rice, with just a little dal or buttermilk.

Also, in rural areas, poor people may farm on plots of borrowed land. Even though they cultivate healthy grains/pulses or fruits and vegetables the major share of the harvest is taken away by the landowners.

Over the past few decades several environmental factors, changes in farming practices (farmers are no longer cultivating traditional grains and have shifted to wheat/rice cultivation) and food marketing strategies have affected the quality of diets. It has also resulted in decreased consumption of locally and regionally available foods which are nutritionally adequate (rich in all vital nutrients). All these changes have a higher adverse affect on the poor.