

#HEALTH AND FITNESS

Nutrition and COVID-19: Q & A

Recently, there has been a surge in the number of patients infected with the novel Corona virus. Proper diet is one tool for building the body's strength against the disease. Here, we present some of the frequently asked questions, and their answers, regarding the role of diet in fighting COVID-19.

There has been much talk about nutrition as a defence mechanism to reduce the chances of contracting the Corona virus. How important is a change in our dietary intake in order to fight the virus?

The Corona virus is an unpredictable enemy for all of us, but it's been proven that a good immune system can save us from any viral or bacterial infection. So, especially in this pandemic, our utmost effort should be towards strengthening our immune system.

To boost up the immune system the utmost need is to enrich the diet with vit C (guava, citrus fruits, amlaki, bitter guard, etc), zinc (spinach, beef, nuts, milk, and milk products), vit D3 (sunlight for 10 to 15 minutes from 10 am to 3 pm), anti-oxidants (colourful fruits and vegetables), selenium, magnesium, etc.

Why hydration is considered so important?

Hydration is key in regulating body temperature. Staying hydrated also means healthy membranes. When we cough, sneeze or just breathe, membranes in our nose and mouth eliminate bacteria. Moisture helps heal the broken membrane, so additional organisms can't enter the body. And also, we need to replace our body fluid loss to make the respiratory secretion thin.

The Corona crisis has led people to unprecedented financial hardships. What would be your suggestion for people to include in their diet at an affordable price?

Right at this moment not just for economic crisis, even for those who do not want to go to the grocery shop to maintain physical distancing can depend upon sprouted Bengal gram for a rich source of vitamin C.

We can prepare khichuri (the mixture of pulses and rice) as a source of first-class proteins. We should depend upon seasonal colourful vegetables as rich sources of vitamins and minerals.

What should be included in the diet of those who have unfortunately contracted the Corona virus? Should the diet change as they recover?

COVID-19 positive patients must have a high protein diet to make the immune system stable, as well as to stop the catabolism. Also as per WHO guidelines, they need to intake minimum 2.5 lit fluid and fresh, healthy vitamin enriched foods. There is a need to restrict consumption of raw sugar, and to include at least 5 servings of vegetables and 4 servings of fruits per day.

Black cumin, ginger, honey, and turmeric have anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties, so can be included in the diet as well.

Lastly, can diet alone help prevent Covid-19?

No, diet alone cannot fight against the Corona virus. Proper and balanced amount of exercise, sound mental health and to maintain all the protocols of hygiene and physical distancing are essential.



Bhumi, the picturesque story of community generated land-art in Thakurgaon

Last year, when the entire world stalled and the lockdowns were phasing in and out within the boundaries of every nation, Durjoy Rahman, the founder of Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation spent a lot more time thinking about the artisans hailing from the rural communities of our country — how they would lead their lives when practically every sort of income mechanism had been disrupted. This is when the art connoisseur decided to collaborate with Kamruzzaman Shadhin, Gidree Bawlee Foundation of Arts, to launch 'Bhumi' (Earth), a project to support creative communities of the Thakurgaon district during the COVID-19 crisis.

"I had to start somewhere, and Thakurgaon seemed to be the right place to begin such a mega-scale project, since there are hundreds of traditional craftsmen out there, especially from indigenous communities such as Santals, Rajbongshi and others who were looking for support," Durjoy elaborated.

This project catered to around 60 families with more than 250 members. The four-month long project had been developed meticulously to tackle the preliminary stages of the economic downturn faced by the resident communities, an after-effect of the sprawling pandemic.

"We planned on the project to help the community of artisans 'up-north' and make their craftsmanship identified and celebrated, to the entire nation. But somehow, luckily, our works surpassed the boundaries and became a worldwide sensation, with popular news outlet CNN featuring our story to the global audience,"

said Durjoy.

And true it was, the drone shots of the seed bed by renowned nature photographer, Firoz Al Sabah made several rounds on social media, with praises pouring in from all corners of the world for the remarkable flair of the agricultural farmers. The project also highlighted the works of the jute artisans for their



innovative scarecrow construction, the bamboo artisans, the distinctive fabric weavers, and the satranji (handcrafted rug) weavers of the district.

"We took the virgin (never-been-farmed) land on lease, to grow vegetables on a designed seedbed, with 'zero use' of modern-day technology or any sort of harmful pesticides. The seedbed had been shaped in the form of a buffalo and then when we took a drone shot, it turned out to be a huge sensation, with incredible representation of the ancient farming methodologies. My personal feeling is

that I have been associated with a huge number of artists over the years, but Bhumi educated me in ways that are beyond comprehension. And I am glad to have been associated with such an auspicious project from the planning stage."

"I also want people at large to know that DBF (Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation) does not believe in abandoning a community after a project work is completed; we keep regular contact with the artisans associated with Bhumi till date, and help them through every means possible, whenever necessary," he said.

Inquired about the future prospects of similar projects, Durjoy revealed that he always wants DBF to be associated with similarly industrious and inspiring projects.

"Art is existent everywhere, in every form in every place and bringing that art to the forefront is our duty. DBF wants to inspire people. My dream is to establish DBF as a platform, where young, rising artists with impeccable talents can come and connect with ease. We are here to represent Bangladesh in its truest form, from the peripheries to the urban cities," said Durjoy.

At the end of our rendezvous with Durjoy Rahman, we had one question placed in front of him.

How do you want people to remember DBF in the long term?

"Just as an institution that is trying hard to make an impact on human lives via art and culture," reflected the art connoisseur.

**By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo: Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation & Gidree Bawlee Foundation of Arts**