

Cooking Skill- An Effective Tool to Manage Obesity and Diseases

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Home cooking is a vehicle to promote health and well-being. Accumulated evidence has linked the traditional culture of home-cooking with healthier food choices and higher intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products resulting in lower risk of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and other morbidities. In past decades nutrition science has emerged to deal with them. However, cooking skill is another side of same coin to utilize the nutrients in the body. Nutrition demonstrates its profound impact on the body to promote and protect health and manage diseases. It is always advisable to consume nutrients from natural food sources rather than consuming them from ultra-processed foods or supplementation through nutraceuticals. Unfortunately, cooking food at home have taken a back seat in last few decades and there has been multipronged options for disliking cooking in many societies such as social stigma attached to drudgery laden cooking procedures, easy access to tasty packaged foods, time consuming jobs, sedentary life style etc. Studies have also revealed other barriers to cooking like deskilling of domestic cooks and mothers remain no longer efficient to transfer cooking skills to the next generation. Foods loaded with High Fat, Sugar, and Salt (HFSS) and chemical additives are frequently and popularly accessible, fashionable, and often affordable and conveniently used despite profound advocacy to avoid them through dietary guidelines and diet counselling from experts. Researches have shown that low frequency of home cooking is associated with obesity among children, teens, and adults and the same is linked with unhealthy eating behaviours and exponentially growing rate of NCDs in different population around the globe.

Unprecedentedly lockdown due to COVID-19 has swept the health and the food systems in the whole world in one stroke. This has made the dramatic shift in food access, kitchen practices, cooking methods, and eating behaviour. Millions of people have realised the concept of home-cooked food and learned the kitchen basics for feeding their families first time. Kitchen basics included making grocery list, procuring food items, finding sources of food supply, organising kitchen tools, utensils, gadgets; chopping vegetables, boiling egg, cooking simple rice, stir frying vegetables, cleaning dishes etc. that may be habitual and unavoidable daily chore for some but new and annoying for others. However, many have also accepted it as an essential life skill, a source of appreciation, family togetherness and better health parameters.

Undoubtedly this forced change in the food systems, under or overflowing food stocks, time available at home not only shaken the food economy and certain food facilities. On the hand it has created the platform for eating more healthy menus. Cooking dinner involving all family members has not only been associated with consumption of a healthier meals but also made the dining more cherishing. Consumers are no longer addicted to order meals and stop while travelling for smackers and beverages. Despite struggling with unpronounceable ingredients, inmates have compromised to learn to make good salads, sandwiches, soups and innovate newer recipes too. Cravings for

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sweets, snacks, fast foods have reduced, however, being at home food frequency have escalated for all day munchies. Understandably there have been episodes of anxiety, boredom fatigue and depression and food has come as a crusader for them [1-3].

Learning to cook your own meal have also leveraged the understanding of basics of nutrition and incorporation of nutritious food ingredients in to the daily diets. Grocery shopping and cooking recipes were most searched words on internet. For last few years, several kinds of food campaigns and cooking skill interventions, targeting all age groups (Child, Teen and Adult), are allegedly included in strategies to tackle obesity and chronic diet-related diseases. Workshops on food safety measures, meal planning, judicious combinations of food items, utilizing leftovers, preparing recipes, healthy snacking, and home gardening may support health and food behaviour many folds. Overall food literacy is a holistic approach to address nutrition, food science, food technology for improved eating behaviour, enhance immunity and manage body weight and NCDs. It's time to concentrate on developing the cooking skills like other skills. This skill can be incorporated into the curriculum considering the age appropriateness in selection of cooking glossary and practice in environment-feasible ways.

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