



# About the project

## The 12 - Week Fitness Project

- Started at beginning of the year
- Theme - fitness is simple and uncomplicated. You don't have to do fancy diets or workouts
- We wrongly measure fitness as weight loss or getting thinner. But it's things which have an effect in your daily life - energy levels, sleep quality, digestion, etc, that matter
- Started as a small experiment, turned into a massive movement. World's largest open participation public health project. More than 75k participants from over 20 countries
- The 12 weekly guidelines were simple and easy to follow. Basic instructions were given and participants followed and tracked their progress every week
- Over 12 weeks, on an average 35% improvement in each of the health parameters was reported
- More than 2000 people lost more than 2 inches from navel. More than 70% lost at least an inch

## Launch video

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155246240818424/>

### WORLD'S LARGEST OPEN PARTICIPATION PUBLIC HEALTH PROJECT

**75K+** REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS

**20+** COUNTRIES ACROSS THE GLOBE

**1** GUIDELINE EVERY WEEK (TO BE PROGRESSIVELY FOLLOWED)

**6MILLION+** VIDEO VIEWS

**35%** AVG. IMPROVEMENT IN HEALTH PARAMETERS

**40%** INCREASE IN PARTICIPANTS DOING STRENGTH TRAINING

**2K+** LOST MORE THAN 2 INCHES FROM THE NAVEL

**70%** LOST ATLEAST AN INCH FROM NAVEL

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## Note

- Its ok to have chai or coffee 10-15 mins post this meal
- Have a glass of (only) plain water and then have this meal
- Eat this within 20 mins of waking up or post the thyroid pill if you are on one

Banana - for all those who have digestion issues or get sugar cravings post a meal. Buy fresh, local variety. Buy at least 2-3 times a week and do not bring them home in plastic bags, use a cloth bag instead.

7-8 soaked Raisins with 1-2 strands of *kesar* - if you have rated yourself as a person with terrible PMS or with low energy through the day.

4-6 soaked & peeled *badam* - if you have insulin resistance, diabetes, PCOD\* or low fertility or poor sleep quality. Pick the *mamra* or the local variety of *badam*, its richer in nutrients. For PCOD - Switch to 7-8 Raisins and 1-2 strands of *kesar* 10 days before periods.

## FAQs

### **I don't like Banana, what should I do?**

Pick any regional, local fruit that is currently in season.

### **I have a bit of all 3 issues, what should I eat now Banana or Almonds or Raisins?**

Pick the one you most like eating as the first meal in the morning. Also feel free to eat Banana today, Almonds tomorrow, Raisins day after. Essentially, learn to be self-dependent, that's the name of the game buddy.

### **So if I am PCOD what exactly should I eat?**

Soaked Almonds and then 10 days before periods switch to soaked Raisins and kesar. If you are unable to predict period date, make the switch when you begin to feel bloated or irritated. This can be followed for endometriosis and adenomyosis too.

### **Why are we soaking the Almonds?**

To unlock the nutrients from it and to allow the phytic acid levels (which can otherwise bind to minerals like zinc and make them unavailable for our body) to go down.

## Week 1 - Update

- You can workout/ do yoga, etc., 15-20 mins after having the Banana/ Almonds/ Raisins
- If not working out, you can have your breakfast within an hour of this meal
- Don't add anything to the water you are having in the morning, just have plain water

**Video link**

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155263095883424/>

**Note**

1. You can have your breakfast about 20-90 mins post the first meal that you are following from week 1.
2. Add an extra tsp of ghee to lunch if you have sweet cravings or experience post afternoon slump where you feel that you are operating on 50% of potential.
3. Add an extra tsp of ghee to dinner if you wake up feeling constipated, have IBS or digestion issues in general or suffer from poor sleep quality.
4. Some other ways to add ghee, especially in winters to keep the joints supple and skin glowing are:-
  - Have ghee roasted *makhanas* as a mid-meal around chai time, say 4pm

- *Goond laddoos* made in ghee especially if you live in North- India or in parts of the world with harsh winters as a mid-morning meal, 2-3 hrs post breakfast
- Ghee & Jaggery as post lunch or dinner if you suffer from PMS, fatigue or low Hb levels.

## FAQs

### **I have cholesterol/ high triglycerides/ fatty liver/ BP issues. Can I have ghee?**

Yes, totally. Ghee regulates cholesterol by increasing contribution of lipids towards metabolism. Cut back on packaged products like biscuits and avoid alcohol not ghee. Ghee is safe.

### **I am overweight/ have diabetes/ PCOD. Can I have Ghee?**

Yes, essential fatty acids like the one found in ghee help accelerate fat loss and even help regulate blood sugars (reduce risk of obesity related diseases).

### **We cook in Ghee, do we need to add extra tsp on top of that?**

That choice would be yours. Ensure that you are getting around 3-6 tsp of ghee per day/ per person. The key is that ghee should enhance the flavour of food and not mask it.

### **We cook in oil, can we add ghee on top before eating?**

Yes, you should add ghee.

### **Is the store bought ghee ok if we can't make at home?**

Yes, but then check that it is from desi cow milk. Patronise ghee from small gaushalas and small women cooperatives over large corporations.

### **If desi cow ghee not available, can we make from buffalo milk?**

Yes, you can. This is better than buying ghee from big brands.

### **Options for those outside India?**

Cultured white organic butter or the clarified butter that is sold in health food stores. Look for free grazing, grass fed cow milk products.

### **Do I need to add ghee on top of non-veg food also? Doesn't it already has fat?**

Yes, you should. The unique fatty acid structure of ghee is very helpful for the body.

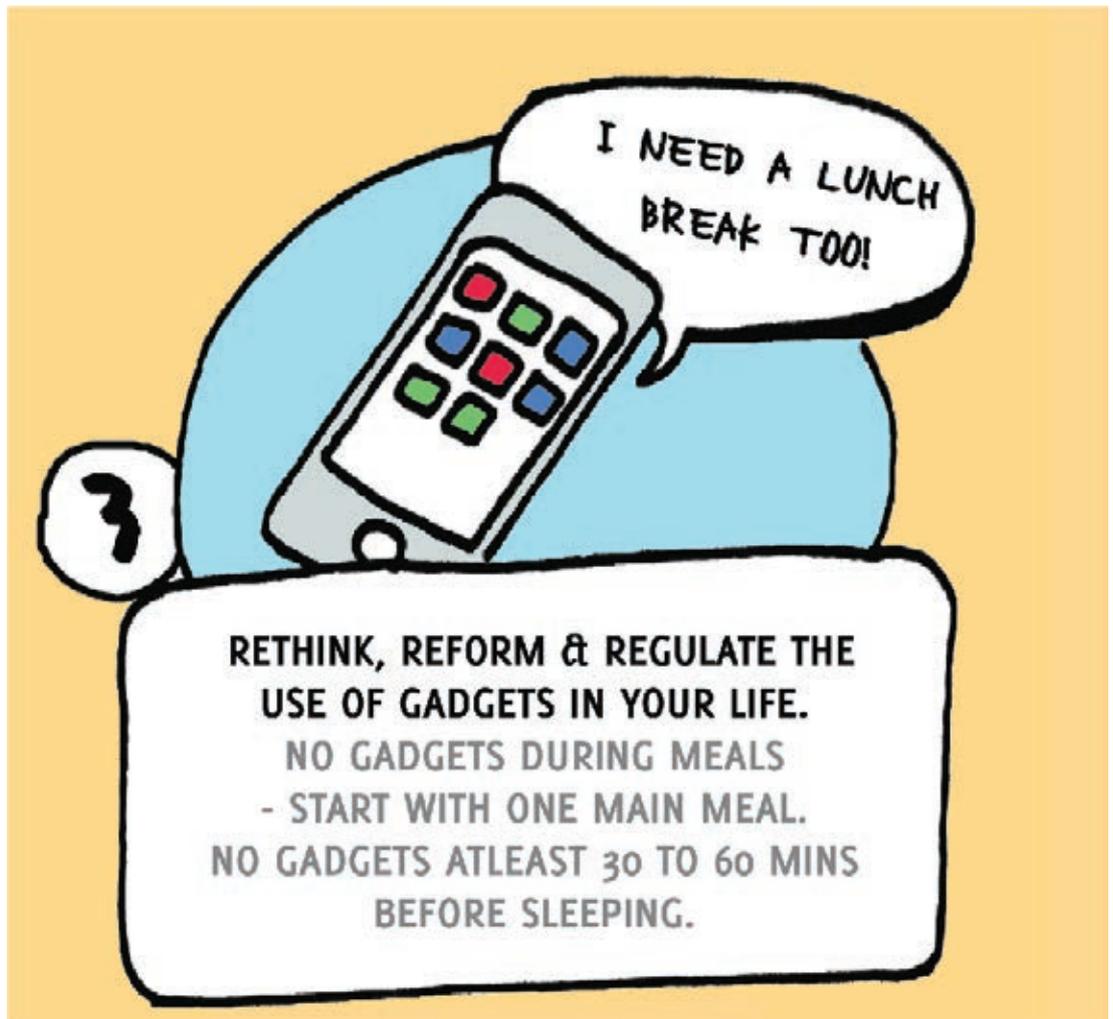
**How do we know how much ghee to be added in each meal?**

It depends on what you are eating and this info is part of our collective food wisdom. Foods like dal-rice, *khichdi*, *roti-sabzi* will require lesser ghee compared to *puran poli*, *dal baati*, *bajra roti*, etc. Ask your grandmother if you have any confusion.

Read the Ghee chapter from “**Indian Superfoods**” for much more details and uses of Ghee.

**Online link here -**

<https://www.juggernaut.in>

**Video link**

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155279265833424/>

**Why?**

The human head is heavy and we have spent months as babies learning to stabilise it. In a neutral position, ears above the shoulders, the head weighs about 5-6 kg. But then with just a 15 degrees tilt downwards it weighs more than double - about 15 kg, at 30 degrees its 20kg and at 60 degrees it's as much as 30 kg. What do you think this is doing to your back, shoulders and even to the brain?

Most of us want to let go off fat from our stomachs, sport flatter abs and have narrower waist, but it's impossible with all that slouching and "technology posture" as it is called. The technology posture is that much more harmful for people dealing with diabetes, heart and other hormonal issues like PCOD and thyroid and it even interferes with the proper functioning of our adrenal glands and hampers cardio-respiratory processes.

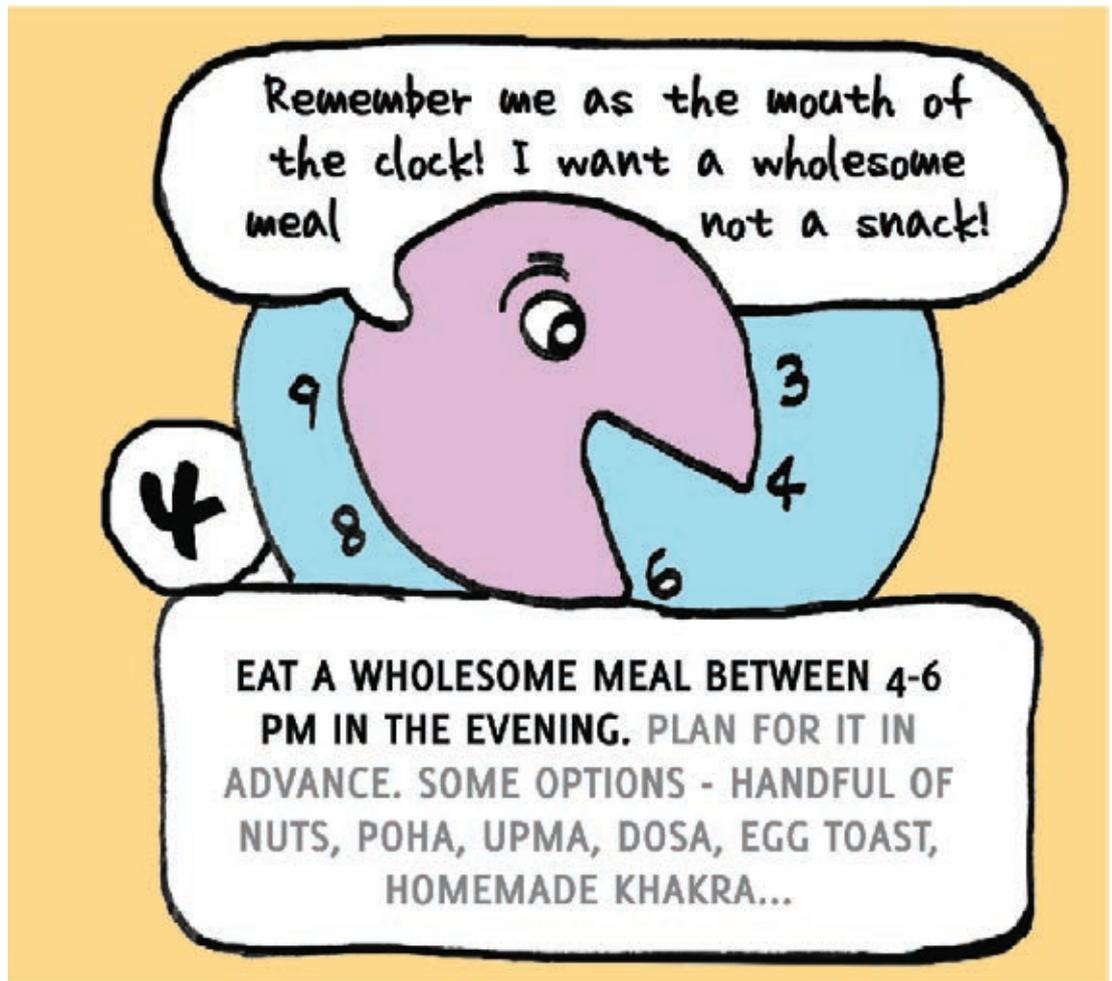
## How?

So from this week, you will take the first step to developing a strong back, flat stomach and a tall stance. This is what i want you to do -

1. When eating meals, no gadgets - Start doing this at 1 meal a day and over the next 10 weeks, build it to all 3 main meals per day. Today when you fill your form, and don't forget to do that - let me know which meal will you start this from - breakfast, lunch or dinner.
2. Before going to bed, no gadget for 30 mins - So don't delay bedtime, just keep the phone away, switch off your TV and read a book (not on kindle or iPad).
3. When you do use the phone in the day, check for your posture - The correct way is to lift the phone at eye level and not to tilt the neck down. One of the things that this will do, is limit your phone usage to only the relevant and important issues as raising the phone doesn't make for a good picture.

I know this is a tough one, but it's worth doing. You have to follow this guideline, along with week 1 and 2 guidelines from hereon.

*Sar utha ke jiyo.*



#### Video link

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155297614483424/>

## Why?

Our hormone cortisol follows a natural cycle, it rises in the morning allowing you to start fresh, clear bowels, etc., and drops in the evening, to allow for restful sleep in the night. That is why waking up fresh and quality of sleep is one of the health parameters we are tracking in this project. Because this tells us about your metabolic health, your immune response, your hormonal balance and your response to stress.

When we don't eat anything in the evening or kill our appetite with chai or coffee, our body works at producing more cortisol instead of reducing it. This will lead to -

- Overeating at dinner
- Poor sleep
- Slow digestion
- PCOD/ Thyroid issues
- Insulin insensitivity (leading to diabetes and many other lifestyle diseases)

## How?

Some meal options for your 4-6 pm meal whether you are at work, on a train, in college, wherever -

1. Handful of groundnuts and *chana* - regulates appetite, prevents bloating and overeating at dinner time. Do this if you eat early dinners, before 8pm. Very good meal for diabetics, for PCOD and those with low energy levels in the day.
2. Jaggery, ghee and *chapati* - if you stay active, work away from home, eat dinner post 9pm and struggle to sleep well, suffer from constipation or have low Haemoglobin levels.
3. *Poha/ Upma/ Dosa/ Egg toast/ homemade khakra or mathri/ homemade Goond or Besan laddoo* - If your work load increases post evening or you have a party to attend or if you have frequent headaches, leg cramps, low immunity this is a good meal. And if none of the above is possible even a grilled vegetable and cheese sandwich, Mumbai ishtyle.
4. *Chaat / Samosa/ Street food* - yes and this is a good time to have it, but only once a week. And the worst time to have *chaat* or street food is dinner.

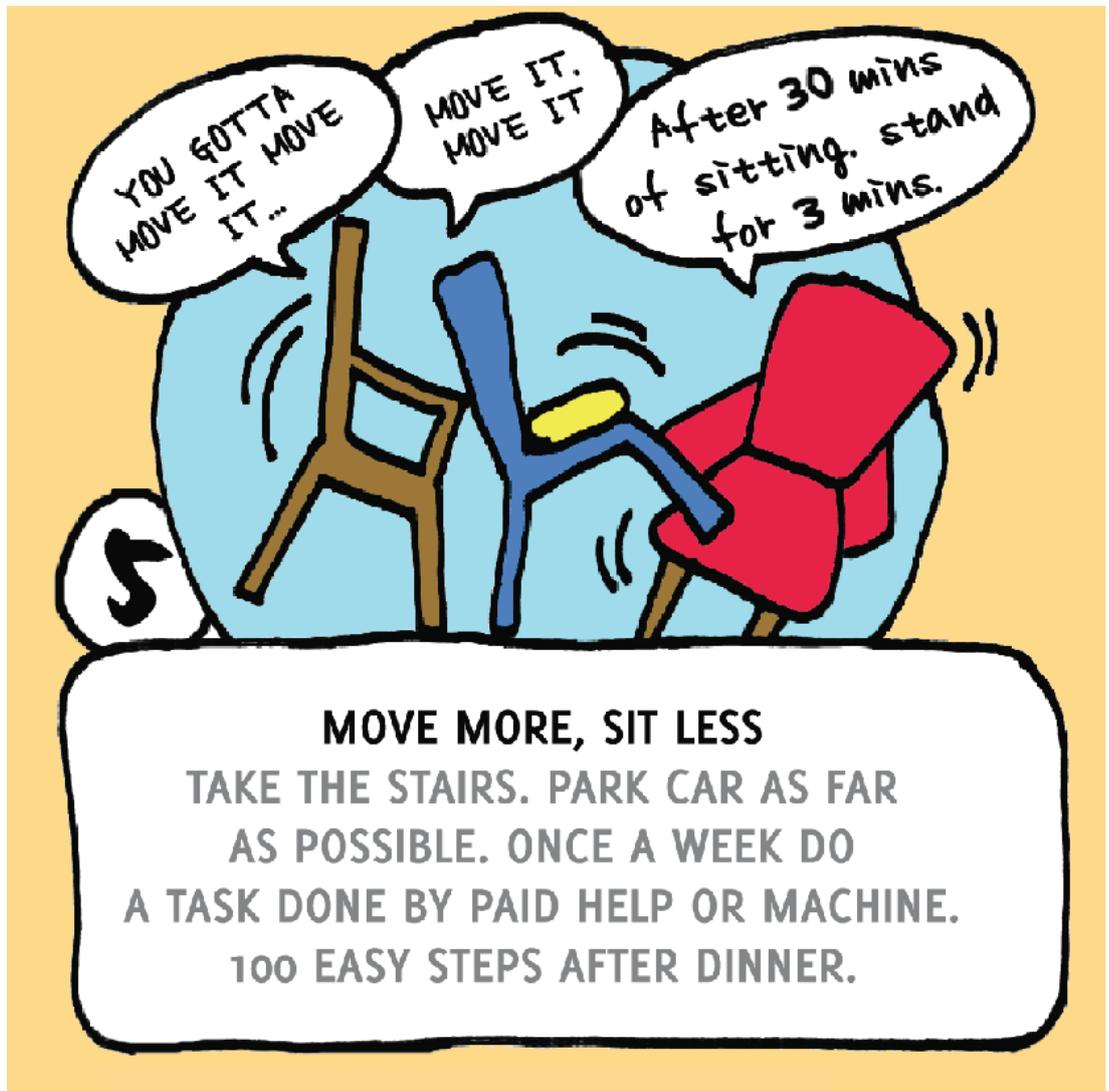
In all cases, expect dinner quantity to naturally drop over the next 4-5 days. This is normal and an expected outcome.

**Most important note** – The 4-6 pm meal only happens if it's planned in advance. Plan for your whole week today itself.

## FAQs

1. If you have a very early dinner, like at 6:30/ 7 pm – You must be having your lunch early and the 4-6 pm time in your case will be 3-5 pm. You can choose one of the lighter options from the list above.
2. If you workout in the evening – Have your 4 R's post workout (details in don't lose out, workout), including a Banana and a protein shake and this becomes your wholesome meal. If you workout at about 7pm, you can have any of the above meal options latest by 5:30 pm and your dinner immediately post workout.

3. If you have night shift or odd working hours – you just have to move the timing accordingly. Your 4-6 pm meal could be earlier or later according to your work hours.
4. The 4-6 pm meal needs to be wholesome – this means no oil-free, sugar-free, exotic fruits, juices or any ‘diet’ options. Have a traditional meal the way it is supposed to be. You will lose all of the benefits of this meal if you mess up the basics. As much as possible, stick to the easy and made at home options listed above.



#### Video link

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## How?

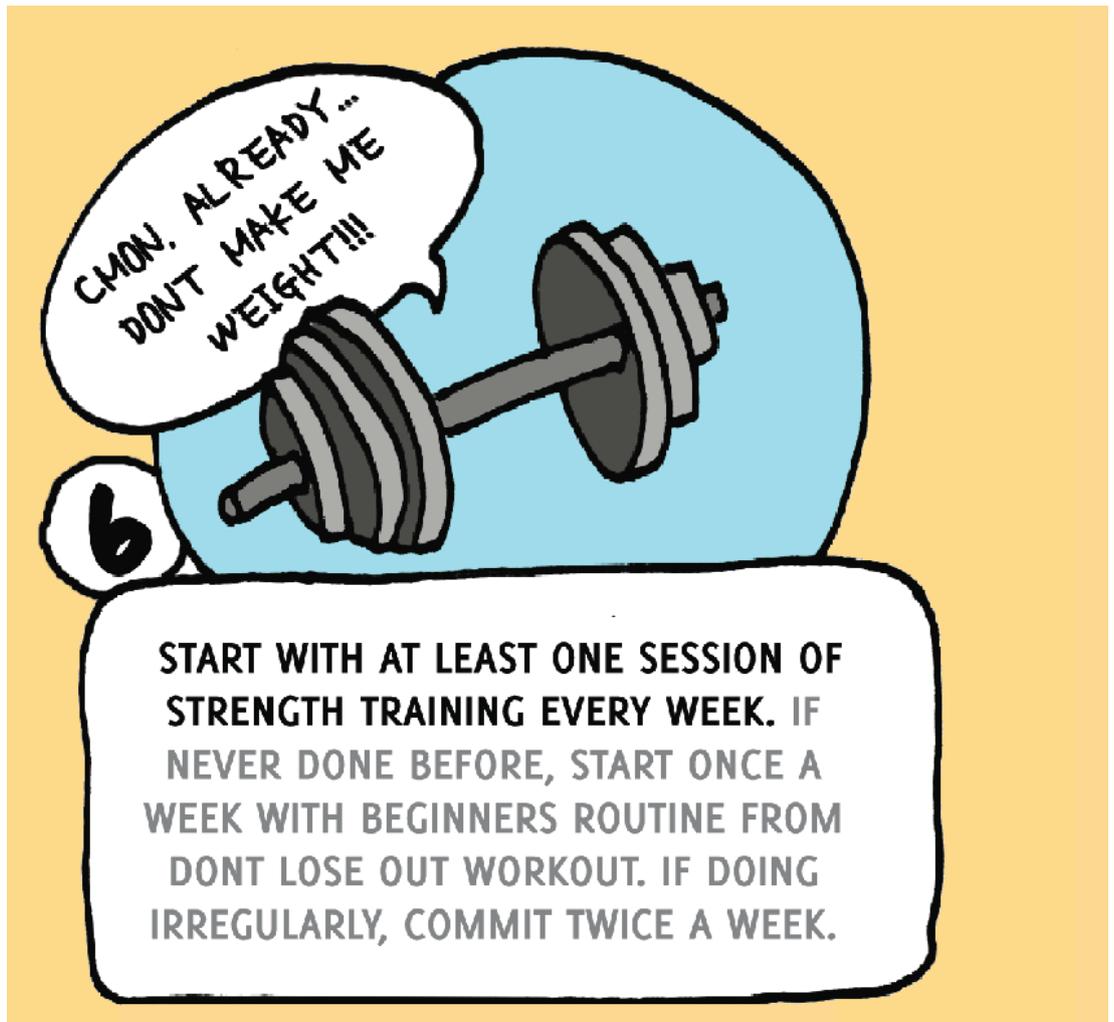
Here are some easy ways to move more, sit less-

1. For every 30 mins of sitting, stand at least for 3 mins
2. When you stand, stand with your weight well distributed on your two feet
3. Take the stairs at work or home, every day. At least climb 4 floors up everyday
4. Park your car as far as possible, keep at least 500 steps between your car and your destination. Paris btw is banning cars from the city by 2030

5. Once every week, walk around your neighbourhood or walk your child to school/ park/ friend's house/ restaurant, etc. Walking is good not just as an activity, but also at building strong community bonds and for the environment
6. Once every week, do at least one task that is currently being done by house help or gadget - wash your own clothes, do dishes for the entire household, sweep and swab your house
7. If you are a man, cook a meal and/or clean up after the family has eaten at least once a week. You can make just dal rice or khichdi but building a nurturing environment is crucial for good health too.
8. 100 steps or *shatapavli* after dinner

You may not realise the importance of movement and activity but it keeps the brain plasticity, especially in older adults, helps prevent back pain, diabetes, heart disease and even depression. Move now, leave sitting for the lesser and later.

And remember, activity is different from exercise, and is not a substitute. We will discuss exercise in detail in coming weeks.



### Video link

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155317536748424/>

## Benefits

- Prevents Diabetes and if you already have it, has the potential to get you on lowered dosages if not totally off medicines.
- Regulates period cycle and leads to pain free periods. Make conception easy if you want a baby.
- Reduces arthritic pain and uric acid.
- Reduces Blood pressure and resting heart rate.
- Improves functioning of the brain.
- Increases gait speed (can walk faster).
- Reduces depressive thoughts and improves sleep.

List endless *hai boss* but the thing is that all of us talk about how we gain weight post 30, but we are losing muscle, so then what weight are we gaining? That of fat. The tissue that doesn't add to your mobility, strength, agility or sex appeal. But you cannot measure fatness on the weighing scale. So get off the weighing scale and get under a squat rack.

## Notes

### 1. If you have never weight trained before -

Start now. Schedule a meeting with an expert trainer at a local gym and begin with once a week routine. You can also use the beginner's routine from 'Don't lose out, workout.' You must especially start if you already have insulin resistance, are very obese, have a heart condition, bone loss or diabetes. That much more important for older adults (men and women).

### 2. If you are already training but are not regular -

Get regular and dedicate at least 2 times a week to strength training. This is especially crucial for all those who have PCOD, breakouts, menopausal or have thyroid. Focus on bringing in progressive overload into your workouts. Read more about it in the 'Strength training' chapter of 'Don't lose out, workout' and follow the intermediate routine.

### 3. If you are training 3 or more days a week -

Shabash! Drop your reps to 5-8 and focus on the intensity or the actual weight you subject your muscles to (advanced routine from 'Don't lose out, workout'). The biggest gains of strength training come from the load bearing that you train your muscles to do.

Over the next week, I will release facts about exercise science which will help you build a more resilient and solid workout plan.

'Don't lose out, workout' is free to download on Kindle unlimited, here - <https://goo.gl/EKT5Ve>

## FAQs

### I already do cardio/ swimming/ Zumba/ dancing, etc, should I strength train?

Yes. And the reason is after burn -

Excessive Post exercise Oxygen Consumption (EPOC) or 'After burn' is a process that follows every session of strength training, where the body burns fat at a higher rate for up to 36-48 hrs. This is not the case with aerobic exercises where fat burn, if at all, happens only during the duration of exercise.

This is especially helpful for the obese or those suffering from hormonal imbalances due to excessive body fat.

## Is there an alternative to gym that we can do at home?

Two scenarios –

1. You have access but don't want to go to gym because you are apprehensive/ shy/ don't have time/ it's too loud/ it's for body builders only/ etc.

The benefits of weight training outweigh all of the above concerns. Working out in gym is the safest way to weight train as you can use machines and light weights (lighter than body weight) to train with a proper form. By gradually increasing weight, you can make progress in your strength. Follow the link below for videos on how to perform weight training exercises.

2. You don't have access to a gym at all.

In that case, you can learn some basic strengthening exercises that use minimum or no equipment.

**Follow this link** - <http://www.exrx.net/Questions/BasicProgram.html>

**I have just started weight training, my blood sugar levels are better, my thyroid is better, my jeans are getting loose, but I haven't lost a gram, in fact I have GAINED a couple of kilos!**

First things first, change that sad face to a broadly smiling one. Weight training increases fat-free weight, that of your bones and muscles. Obviously that's going to mean some additional grams or kilos to your body mass. Not to forget the fact that as you start storing more muscle glycogen, it adds to body weight too.

Technically you can gain or lose up to five kilos of body weight without gaining or losing a single gram of fat. Body weight is no measure of fatness or fitness. Look at exercise performance instead; it's the sure shot measure of your body's fat-burning ability (health, fitness and risk to diseases). If you are pushing more weight, feeling more enthusiastic about exercise, looking forward to your routine in the gym, it means you are on track. That's it.



### Video link

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155353475038424/>

### Why?

**Easy to digest** increases leptin sensitivity and therefore improves sleep quality - it is a prebiotic (food for probiotic) and keeps the gut strong. Bye Bye constipation. - The BCAA (branch chain amino acids) in rice have muscle sparing effect (you will see results of workout faster). - suitable for people of all kinds of constitutions (*doshas - vata, pitta and kapha*).

There is so much to rice, but here are some of the hidden nutrients –

Methionine – it's a sulphur containing amino acid that helps prevent damage to the skin tone by free radicals, helps detox the liver and slows down the ageing process. Better skin and hair, lesser lines and even lesser greying.

Vitamin B1 - good for the nerves, heart and helps reduce inflammation and bloating. Also a good source of B3, you can increase values if you soak rice for a while before cooking it.

RS - Resistant starch, a molecule that gets fermented in our large intestines. It helps prevent cancer, improves lipid profile and inhibits growth of the bad bacteria.

## Who?

Everyone. The way we Indians eat rice, with dal and ghee, ensures that the meal stays low on the glycaemic index and there is a steady blood sugar response. It is therefore perfectly fine for anyone with Diabetes, heart disease or any other disease, for pregnant women, for young and old, active and sedentary, thin and obese.

## FAQs

### How to cook rice?

Cook it the way in which it tastes the best, which is invariably how your grandmother used to.

### Brown or White rice?

Hand pounded or single polished white rice. Too much fibre in brown rice comes in the way of absorption of minerals like Zinc, crucial for insulin function.

### Which rice to eat?

There are thousands of varieties of rice in India, each one having its own distinct aroma and flavour. These aromatic compounds provide many nutritional benefits and work like antioxidants in the body, helping defy the effects of ageing. So eat the variety which grows in (or closest to) the region you live.

### Rice and roti together?

Yes, you can if you have the appetite.

### What if we have late dinner? Can we still have rice?

Yes, it's the easiest meal to digest. You can have it as khichdi or dal-rice.

### Can diabetics have rice?

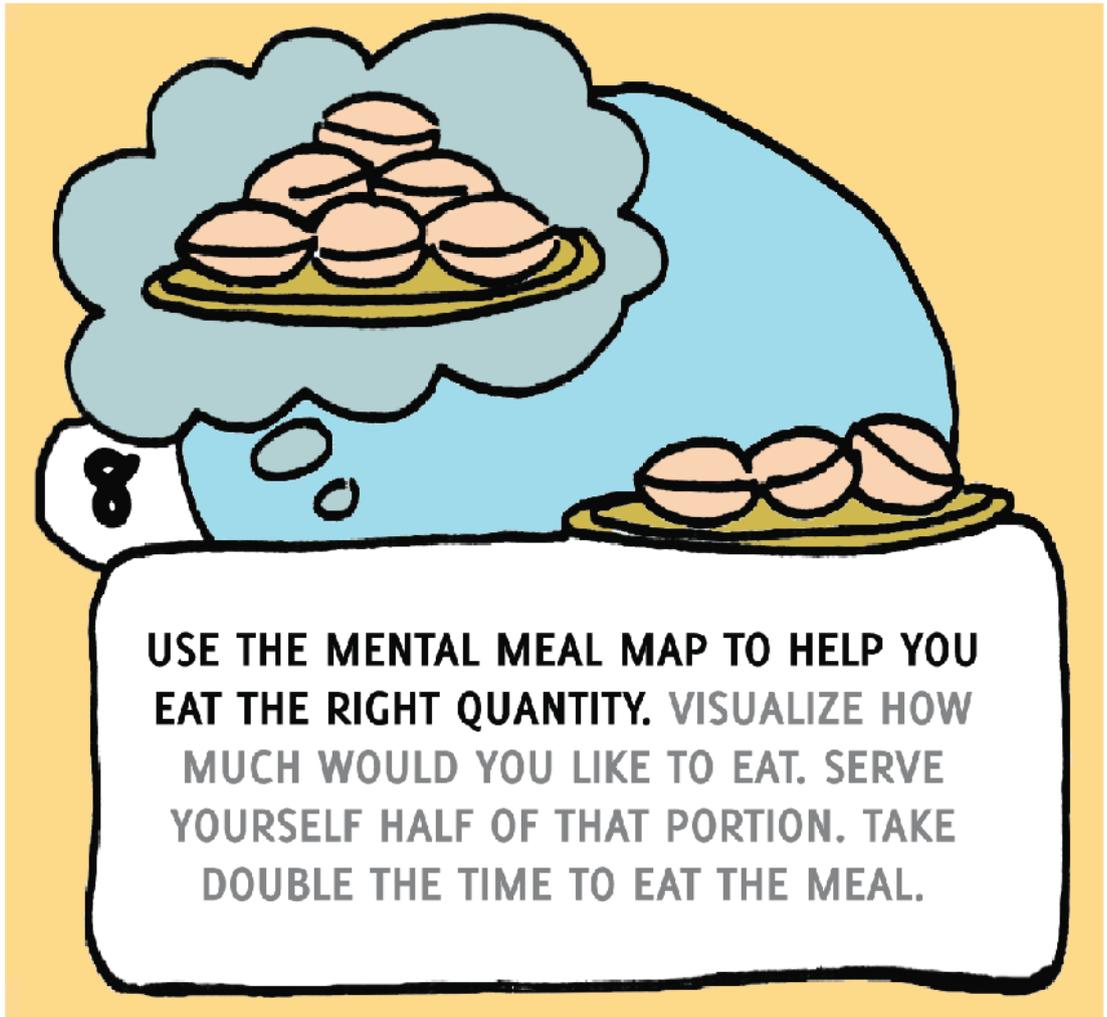
Rice is traditionally eaten with *dal/sabzi/meat/dahi*, etc., along with ghee, and this lowers the glycaemic index of meals and is therefore totally safe for diabetics.

**I feel hungry later if I have only dal rice?**

Make sure you add ghee to your dal rice and eat slowly and with full attention. Have a glass of milk before sleeping if still hungry.

**How much QUANTITY?**

If you have been having a wholesome meal between 4-6pm and are exercising and are keeping the gadget away during meal times, you will be eating just right. Nothing more, nothing less. More about quantity coming soon in the Fitness project guidelines.

**Video link**

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155371295023424/>

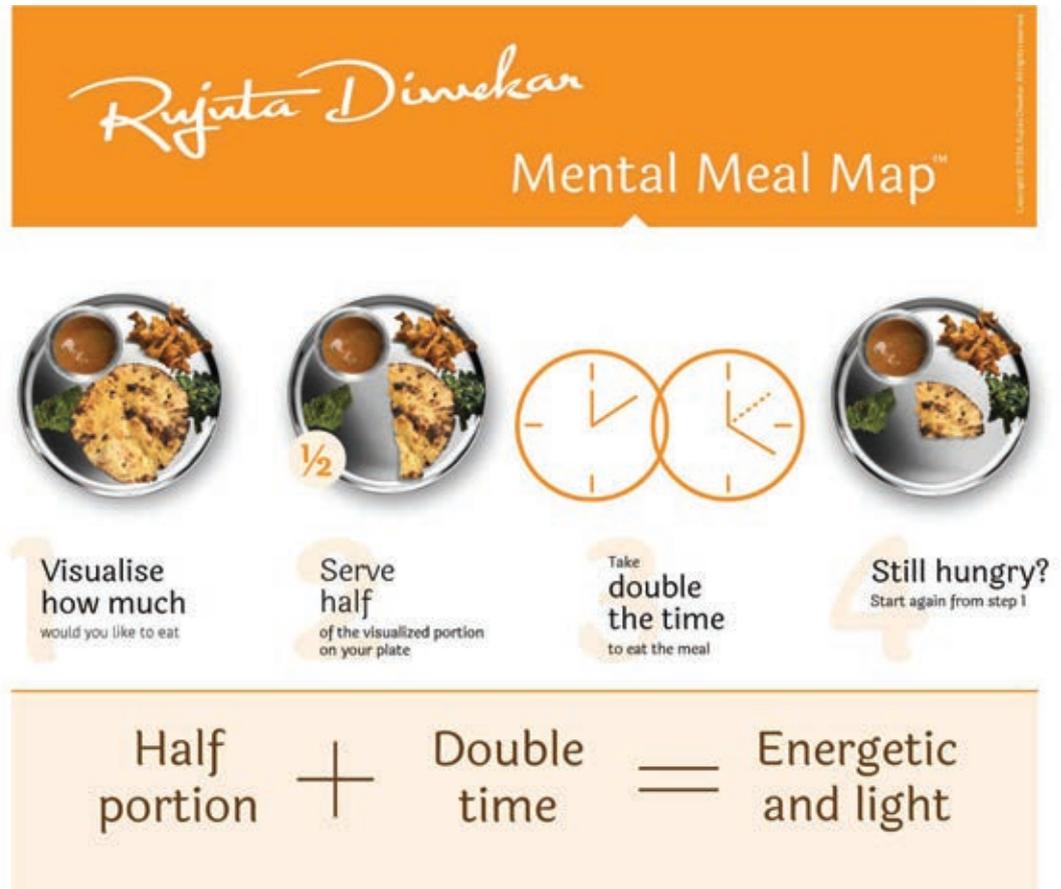
When the eyes become clear, body healthy and appetite increases, it's a sign of success according to *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. No wonder then that when you portion control, force yourself to eat lesser, mask your appetite with tea/ coffee/ chewing gum/ soups/ fibre gels, etc., success, even on the path of weight loss, becomes elusive.

A good life is where you are able to tell the difference between your need and greed. A life where you learn to enjoy food, fitness and health without feelings of guilt, remorse and frustration. But today we feel that we are fat because we eat too much or consume too many calories. The truth is that we live in 'obesogenic environments' - we have created situations and formed habits where it's almost impossible for us to nurture our appetite and eat just the right amount.

And so we have the Mental Meal Map to our rescue, a simple tool that anyone can use to understand their appetite and learn how much to eat.

Use the mental meal map as a tool to help you eat the right quantity.

The below infographic explains the simple steps of the mental meal map.



Along with the Mental Meal Map, follow this eating etiquette -

- Fix a place where you will eat and as often as possible eat at the same place
- No phones, TV or any gadget during meals – you already know that
- Sit down in Sukhasana (if possible) and eat with your hands
- Drink a glass of water before your meal

Start the MMM and the above eating etiquette for at least one main meal every day and watch it grow intuitively into all other aspects of your life.

Mental meal map is also extremely useful when you are eating out in restaurants or in weddings and party buffets.



#### Video link

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155389216798424/>

## Why?

Top 3 benefits of daily *Suryanamaskar* practice -

1. Gives you a strong muscular back - given our inactivity, poor posture, etc., we are losing the strength in the back which is required to keep not just the spine healthy but to connect the strength in the physical body, more specifically of the gluteus, to the strength or calm in the mind. If we feel weak in our body and aggressive in our mind it's because we don't have a strong back.
2. Offers ageless, radiant skin - this is not just a cosmetic benefit but a real reflection of good health. Skin is the largest organ of our body and if the skin is healthy it means that kidney, liver, heart, all of the organs are healthy and well nourished.
3. Hormonal balance - if there is one exercise that works directly on our glands - thyroid, adrenals, pituitary, and then it's the *Suryanamaskar*.

From optimum metabolism, pain free period to healthy levels of Vitamin D, the practice will ensure that the glands work at their best.

## How?

### Basics of a *Suryanamaskar* practice -

- Choose a fixed place at home, preferably a well ventilated one
- Fix a time to do it daily - sunrise or sunset are good times or you can even fix your time as pre breakfast or post bath, whatever works best
- Breathe normally and take your time to learn the correct posture, no rush
- One on right, one on left together make one round. Video link below.

### Special instructions to make progress -

1. If you have never done *Suryanamaskar* before -
  - Start with 2 rounds every alternate day
  - Graduate to 2 rounds every day from week 3
  - Then add 1 round to your practice every alternate week
2. Do it but not very regularly -
  - Tie it to a non-negotiable, for example, won't leave from home without the practice
  - 5 a day is a good number, sustain that
  - If you feel like doing 1 more, wait for 12 weeks. Train the mind to be consistent first.
3. Doing it regularly -
  - Don't take a break even on a Sunday
  - Don't drop below 5 or go beyond 12
  - The idea is to get better with every step and not to mindlessly increase the number



#### Video link

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155407917338424/>

## Options

### 1. *Nariyal pani* – mid morning. Preferably before noon.

Helps keep the acidity and acne down. And if you get enlarged pores at this time of the year, add a small tsp of *sabja* seeds to your *nariyal pani*.

### 2. *Chaas (buttermilk)* – Just after lunch.

Other than being a good source of B12, this coolant will ensure that you are not bloated in the second half of the day.

### 3. *Nimbu sherbet* – with early evening snack.

Add salt, sugar, jeera and black pepper to your *nimbu pani*. There are many alternative sherbets also - *kesudo*, *vaala*, *kokum*, *variyali*, *bel*, etc. Body's natural AC, these micro-nutrient rich sherbets won't let your electrolytes or water soluble vitamins drop, especially important if you are a BP patient. Our grand moms spent centuries fine tuning these recipes, it's our turn now to honour them and keep our cool.

#### 4. **Kulith (horsegram)** – at dinner.

If you have lost your appetite or feel low on energy or are simply feeling too gassy, this is what you need. Either make a dal out of it and eat it with rice, or turn it into a *pithla* (like a soup) with *dahi* and just have that for dinner instead (every region has a recipe for that). You will not just sleep better but also wake up with your skin feeling fresher and tummy flatter. Blame it on the folic acid and mineral rich *Kulith*, the super pulse of India. Also, very good option for those with diabetes or weak digestion.

Benefits of these traditional summer drinks -

- Help reduce acidity and get rid of bloating.
- Promote growth of healthy bacteria and nurture intestinal mucosa
- Give a smooth, flawless complexion
- Prevent UTI and fevers
- Relief from chronic body aches and pains

### FAQs

#### **Apart from *Nimbu pani*, *nariyal pani* and sherbets, what other summer drinks can we have?**

Each region has its own, here are just a few more -

*Ambil* - Mixture of spices with ragi (or nachni) in buttermilk or curd

*Panha* - The *kacha kairi* (raw mango) drink garnished with *kesar*

*Neera* - The virgin palm drink that can cure everything from insomnia to eczema

#### **Can I have sugarcane juice in summers?**

It is ideally a drink for winters but if you are drinking it in summer - crush a bit of ginger to it and always drink it before noon and drink it super fresh, the minute the sugar cane is crushed.

#### **It is still winter where I live, what about us?**

Instead of *chaas* (buttermilk), have *lassi* either mid-morning or late afternoon

Make *kulith daal* and have it with *Bajra* (pearl millet) for dinner. Ok to have with rice too.

You can also have *Amla* sherbet (morning time) and *Chawanprash*, either to begin or end your day.

Peanuts and Jaggery or cashews and Jaggery as a mid-meal

**Fresh coconut water is not available, what are the alternatives?**

The *kokum*, *nimbu*, *ambil*, *panha*, *bel*, even *buransh* - all these are available even when fresh coconut water is not.

**You mentioned *Kulith*, but isn't it a heating food?**

All pulses are traditionally harvested in the winter but stored and eaten through the year.

Belonging to an ancient culture means that there is already a system in place to use them based on the season. So in winters you can turn them to *Kulith parantha* like the Himalayan regions do and in summers you use the same *kulith* but cook it with *dahi* or *chaas* and turn it into a cooling drink, like *Kalan* in Maharashtra. In both seasons, it helps prevent skin ageing, increases Hb levels and helps boost immunity.

Our grandmothers were a smart lot and we have a lot of catching up to do.



## Video link

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155426718743424/>

## Why?

**1. Reduce plastic** - for various reasons but because it's a major pollutant not just for our environment but also for the hormonal balance in our body. It releases estrogenic chemicals in our body and disturbs the ratio between our male and female hormones. Especially important if you have PCOD, adult acne or are a young girl at puberty. Some quick places that you can start from -

- Use cloth bag instead of plastic bags to shop for vegetables and fruits. Avoid buying veggies and fruits that come individually packed in plastic or thermocol.
- No plastic tiffin boxes, especially for hot food and no plastic cutlery, *haath se khao*. Also, no cling films for fruits and *dabbas*. France is the first country to ban plastic cutlery btw. Use steel *dabbas* and *malmal* cloth for wrapping *rotis*, etc.
- Use steel or copper water bottles for drinking water when traveling and not plastic bottles (including mineral water bottles).

## 2. Bring back the iron *kadhai*

Yes please, *inse naata jodo*. Say bye to your Teflon coated non-stick *kadhais* that have made you believe that glory lies in avoiding fat (you know now that it doesn't). The iron *kadhai* is an important and undervalued source of iron in your diet. Cook your *poha*, *upma* and *sabzis* in it. Don't forget to add the ghee or oil and spices and i bet you will never fall short of iron ever again. Also, let go off the aluminium vessels and foils too. You can use stainless steel, *pital* and other varieties. Exposure to aluminium lowers the levels of zinc, an important mineral for our bodies, especially for brain health and preventing diabetes.

## 3. Heat, don't microwave

First of all, if you are microwaving, that means you are just overcooking and then overeating, followed by overstoring and again overeating. So stop this vicious cycle and if you have to heat food, simply heat it slowly on flame. Microwaving is harmful for the micro nutrients in the food as it quickly heats them at extremely high temperatures where their bonds break and they get oxidised and become toxic for your body.

Socho mat zyada, go back to cleaning up your kitchen. And don't forget to involve the men of the household.

**Video link**

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155445898748424/>

**1. Tadka in kacchi ghaani oils**

Use oils native to your region – mustard for north and north east India, groundnut or *til* for central and western and coconut for Kerala. Our native recipes are fine tuned to the fatty acid and nutrient composition of our oils and to make the best out of what we eat, we have to follow it in totality. No jumping on the bandwagon of “heart healthy” or other such promises made by refined vegetable, rice bran, safflower or similar oils. Avoid oil free or fat free at all costs.

And *kacchi ghani* (cold pressed) because then it means that oil is extracted at a lower temperature and therefore fatty acids, vitamins and other nutrients are intact. Very important for diabetics to have traditional oils.

**2. Coconut as garnishing, chutney, etc.**

From supporting gut health to helping you calm your nerves to soothing digestion, there isn't one thing that it can't do. The fact that its anti-bacterial, anti-viral is an added bonus. If you are the type that gets UTI every summer, don't forget the coconut. So garnish your food with it, turn

it into *laddoos* and *barfis*, make chutneys out of it, have the coconut malai and even the dry coconut with Jaggery or just peanuts.

### 3. Cashews as mid-meal or with milk before sleeping

Other than the good fat, it's rich in minerals, amino acids and vitamins. The amino acids help, among other things, in the production of serotonin, the natural sleeping pill whose only side effect is a stable, happy mood the next day. The magnesium helps the nerves to relax. Its tryptophan (an amino acid) and vitamin B combination help make *kaiju* a natural anti-depressant. It's the summer nut and you can eat the cashew fruit too (super rich in Vitamin C). (More details in Indian Superfoods book).

## Why?

Essential fat is required for both the body and the functioning of the brain. Without adequate fat in our diet -

- We won't be able to assimilate vitamins like Vitamin D, minerals and other essential nutrients from our diet.
- We won't produce the right hormones and may suffer from poor joints and nerves. This role that fat plays is especially critical for children.
- The blood sugars will stay unregulated and there will be cravings for sweets after a meal.
- Skin can age prematurely due to lack of nourishment from food.

## FAQs

### How is cooking in traditional oils and ghee beneficial for diabetics?

Cooking in traditional oils is a marker that you are eating more traditional and time tested meals. It is well known that the main challenge with Diabetes is unregulated blood sugars. Meals that are adequate in ghee and oils, the ones that are not shy of calories or essential fatty acids, are low in glycaemic index and have a beneficial effect on the blood sugars. They also help in fat loss and prevent skin pigmentation.

### Belong to North India but staying in South or vice versa. Which oil to use?

Depends on what you are cooking. If you are cooking a regional recipe use the regional oil and if you are making a traditional dish, use the one you grew up eating.

### I live outside India, what are my choices?

First of all, your health food stores are now full of ghee or clarified butter

and really, Indians abroad are in a way spoilt for choice. So you can pick up cold pressed groundnut oil, sesame oil (when winters are harsh), coconut oil, and mustard oil - based on what region of India you belong to.

**Is cashew ok for high BP patients?**

Yes it is. Its rich in minerals that help dilate the blood vessels, making circulation easier and BP more stable.

# Top 3 learnings

1. When we complicate food by looking at it as carb, protein, fat, calories, etc, our health gets complicated. When we look at food as local, seasonal and regional, our health improves.
2. Fitness is build by the compounding effects of small things done daily regards to overall lifestyle and not by following the latest diet or workout trending on social media.
3. Health is not measured on a scale but by markers like sleep quality, exercise compliance, energy levels, sweet cravings, acidity/ bloating, etc., things that can only be felt.

## Video link

<https://www.facebook.com/rujuta.diwekar/videos/10155465311978424/>

