

# Why being Indian is good for your health



How dare our own stand up comedians make fun of us? If only they could learn to look beyond our accent and population, they would discover that our national foibles are doing wonders for our wellbeing. Find the secret to nirvana in hot spices, masala chai and yoga.

## **The sun saves your heart!**

No matter how much you complain about the heat, studies show that exposure to the sun is good for your health.

### **Get hot to be happy**

"Capital melts as temperature rises to a record 47.6!" scream newspaper headlines when summer temperatures soar perilously. However, there is some good in it. "The sun's rays trigger the body's production of Vitamin D, which is vital to the health of your bones," says Dr Navin Taneja, director at The National Skin Centre in New Delhi. The UV rays also prod the pineal gland in the brain to release "tryptamines- mood-boosting chemicals.

### **Don't bare it all**

Limit your sun exposure though: "Skin cancer is on the increase amongst men, especially those who work outdoors," adds Dr Taneja. He advises using a waterproof sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher- allowing you to remain in the sun without burning 15 times longer. Even in the sea or pool on holiday, apply some under your shorts and T-shirts as wet clothing doesn't give enough protection.

### **Aim for the centre**

Research shows that the further you live from the equator, the higher your blood pressure is likely to be.

*UV rays prod the brain to release mood-boosting chemicals.*

## **Chai helps fight diabetes**

The therapeutic property of tea is folklore. But did you know that masala chai, our signature spicy brew, helps you to get through the day without any hiccups?

### **Cure your hiccups**

Hiccups can be public embarrassment. "An infusion of cardamom (elaichi) with mint in chai helps relieve hiccups. Also, since hiccups are often caused by spicy foods, sum up an Indian meal with a glass of cardamom-mix masala chai to get immediate relief," says Neha Sharma, dietician at Jaipur Golden Hospital.

### **Become a better kisser**

To finish off a happy spicy meal, have a warm cup of masala chai. The aromatic flavour in cardamom will leave your mouth fresh and kiss ready. And the power of clove will help you get over the problem of premature ejaculation. Now you know why it's best served hot!

### **Cut your blood sugar**

The cinnamon (dal-chini) in masala chai can help treat diabetes! "A teaspoon of cinnamon with food can reduce blood sugar levels as it promotes insulin production and is therefore given to diabetic patients," says New Delhi-based nutritionist, Dr Sonia Kakkar.

### **Get rid of indigestion**

Have a guest 'who cannot digest Indian food' experience'? "Black pepper (kali mirch) in masala chai has an antioxidant effect and promotes healthy digestion."

*A cup of warm masala chai stops premature ejaculation.*

### **The Hindu pushup builds muscle fast**

The attitude towards training in India seems to orientate towards different fitness styles in diverse regions. You can easily pick up the best virtues of each to customise your own strength and fitness training.

### **Get explosive: North East**

Men from the North-East seem to be very good physical specimens for a variety of sports requiring top explosive strength because of a low centre of gravity. Being naturally built muscular, they seem to readily adapt to any form of training. The proximity of many North-Eastern states to China also seems to have propelled them towards martial arts training. Throw in a generous dose of MMA in your training regimen to round off the rough edges.

### **Lift harder: North India**

People from the North such as Punjab seem to be built taller with stronger bone structures, and this can be seen from the fact that Punjabi men have always had a stronghold in strength sports such as weight-lifting, wrestling and bodybuilding. Follow a rich diet of grains and dairy like they do to provide great fuel to your body. Avoid anabolic steroids that might pump your arms but make you hide the right muscle in bed. Aim for an athletic build.

### **Acquire a skill: South India**

Down South in Kerala, football is quite popular and the general approach to staying fit is somewhat sports-conditioning orientated. Being the birthplace of martial arts in the form of Kalarippayattu, traditional systems are used to enhance flexibility. It is a region where some of India's top athletes and players come from. Acquire a physical skill. To perform better with your body, you need to build fitness that can be used in real life.

### **Court discipline: West and Central India**

In Maharashtra and UP where kushti and pehalwangiri thrives, the training of men has migrated more towards size and strength, and you can still find bodybuilding gyms run by gurus and masters on the old-school models of Vyayamshalas or Akharas. These are places where tough workouts and rigorous discipline have made many a man. You cannot build a perfect muscular body without discipline. Train tough with proper planning.

### **Fasts make you last**

Apart from helping you to lose weight, our custom of fasting on religious occasions can also help you increase your life span.

### **Banish heart disease**

You can reduce the risk for heart diseases and diabetes with short fasts (20-36 hrs), reveals scientific research. Fasting on occasions like Mahashivaratri, Ramzaan and Ekadashi can improve the sensitivity to insulin in your body which can give you better control over your blood sugar levels. If the fast is too rigid and does not allow water intake, break it with sips of fruit juice or water.

### **Delay ageing**

Stay younger longer by observing fasts like the Jains during Paryushan or the Christians during Lent because reduced calorie intake due to fasts like these cuts down free radical production. Studies show that this reduces oxidative damage and inflammation of cells, thus increasing longevity and delaying the onset of age-related diseases. However, avoid even short fasts if you are on medications.

### **Reduce risk**

Short fasts can reduce the risk for heart diseases and diabetes.

*Fasting smartly can help you burn flab and get lean quickly.*

### **Spices sharpen your brain**

Spices have been used in cooking for ages but their utility goes far beyond just culinary use.

### **Prevent cancer**

Turmeric, black pepper, cardamom, cloves and a host of other spices have held fort in Indian kitchens, and their therapeutic properties are indisputable. For instance, it's only now that the world is waking up to turmeric with its antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties. Apply its paste on the face to keep acne at bay. Use it on wounds to disinfect. Drink it with milk to cure cough and cold. And researchers have discovered that an active ingredient curcumin in turmeric also helps prevent cancer.

### **Stop bad breath**

Use cardamom, the queen of spices, to get rid of bad breath. It is also a remedy for colic and digestive problems and well-known as a strong detoxification agent. Chewing cloves can cure your sore throat. And they have antispasmodic qualities as well. So apply clove oil to get relief from muscle spasms and improve blood circulation. Sum up the goodness with black pepper, the king of spices, to treat respiratory infections.

**Remember this** A little bit of cinnamon on spicy dishes will improve your memory.

*Turmeric is the world's best natural miracle drug.*

### **Indian food keeps you 'up'**

It's not for nothing that the kama sutra was conceived in India. Eat Indian to rise up to the occasion, every time.

### **Smell love**

Glenn B Eastman, executive chef at The Leela Palace, New Delhi, says that he loves cooking with love-food. "Cinnamon," points out the chef, "warms the flesh." Eastman's claim is backed by the Smell and Taste Research Foundation in Chicago, which says that the smell of cinnamon is known to increase blood flow to the penis more than any other aroma!

### **Get fresh**

Fennel (saunf) enhances libido due to hormone-like compounds that imitate oestrogen. Pop a few seeds post meals to erect an unforgettable night. Garlic and chillies can also prop you up. Feast on garlic bread or go for garlic 'pearls' or capsules if your partner doesn't like the smell. And eat chillies to feel a temporary high because the capsaicin in it can mimic feelings of sexual arousal.

*Aroma of cinnamon increases blood flow to the penis.*

### **Yoga makes you wise**

Yoga has become a fad globally and politically. However, the best form is still the one that was practised in India aeons ago.

### **Transform your life**

Ashtanga yoga, vinyasa yoga, power yoga, hot yoga, kundalini yoga and nude yoga are packaged forms of the original. Most of these forms have degenerated into mere workouts. For instance, power yoga, which is very popular in the West, is a cardiovascular type of workout for weight loss. If you practise yoga and it doesn't transform your life, then it is just a workout in yoga packaging.

### **Feel invisible**

Yoga has its origin from "Patanjali Shastra", which is an exhaustive treatise on yoga, filtering and consolidating the wisdom of sages from various parts of India. According to yoga experts, your body should feel invisible while doing yoga. If you can feel a joint, an organ or your head, you are not doing it right.

### **Family keeps you content!**

Worried about stress? Relax. Research shows that Indian men are the most satisfied in the world due to their families.

### **Go home tonight!**

Google 'family+stress', and you will be surprised at the sheer number of websites popping up to advise you on family-related stress. But in India, where family always comes first, research shows otherwise. A Men's Health global survey discovered that though the Indian male was among the most stressed out in terms of jobs and living standards, a significant 46 per cent of Indian men were satisfied with their lives. And surprisingly, they attributed it to their families!

### **Share responsibilities**

In India, the system of joint family acts as a stress management tool because members living in one family rotate household chores and responsibilities. On the other hand, working parents get help from other members for taking care of their children. Even arranged marriages have super powers. No wonder India boasts of one of the lowest divorce rates in the world.

### **Love forever**

India boasts of one of the lowest divorce rates in the world, thanks to arranged marriages.

*Spend more time with your family to slash stress.*

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