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HEALTH WISDOM

# Don't let drinking hamper your health

PHOTO: ISTOCK



Always pair your drink with a snack

Anjali Mukerjee

Alcohol, or (ethanol), refers to the intoxicating ingredient found in hard liquor. One small drink (30ml) per day for healthy women and no more than two small drinks per day for healthy men would be considered a moderate intake.

Research suggests that moderate amount of alcohol can be good for your health, but it can also be harmful. It all depends on how much you drink, your age, gender, family medical history, and other factors.

People who should not consume alcohol include children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating mothers, women at risk of breast cancer, those taking medications and those who have any medical issues such as liver or heart problems.

Excess alcohol can increase the risk of:

- Liver disease
- High blood pressure
- High blood fats (triglycerides)
- Heart failure

- Stroke
- Foetal alcohol syndrome
- Injury, violence, and death

Of course, drinking too much alcohol also piles on the calories, and this can lead to obesity and raise the risk of diabetes.

Alcohol is metabolised rapidly by the body. Unlike food, which requires time for digestion, alcohol is quickly absorbed. Alcohol travels through the body, starting from the mouth, to the stomach, into the circulatory system, the brain, kidneys, lungs, and liver.

Following are few tips to reduce the risks caused by drinking to your health:

- Eat before you drink or pair your drink with some snack
  - Sip your drink slowly
  - Space your drinks with water and other non-alcoholic drinks
  - Say no when you know you have had enough
  - Don't leave your drink unattended
- In conclusion, moderate consumption of alcohol can be an enjoyable and a safe experience, provided it is done with prudence.

# TAKE A DIP

Susan Jose

Recently, singer John Legend tweeted that he has started learning swimming at the age of forty. Further, he shared that his father only learnt it in his sixties. The singer's tweet certainly inspired many to either take up swimming or get back to the pool. Herein, we get experts to talk about the multiple benefits of this classic form of exercise, and also get to know who (if there is anyone) should best avoid it.



## SENIOR CITIZENS

For elderly people, swimming is a good

John Legend  
PHOTO: AFP

form of physical activity as it takes lesser toll on their body. "Senior citizens suffering from joint aches will benefit a lot from swimming since this fitness training is very easy on the joints, making this regimen comfortable for them. It also reduces risk of osteoporosis, makes their bodies more flexible, and improves the muscle strength," says Shalini Bhargava, health expert and director, JG's Fitness Centre.

Dr Adnan Badr, lead physiotherapist, Digestive Health Institute by Dr Muff, highly recommends swimming as an exercise for older people. He says, "Senior citizens find it difficult to exercise in the gym, run on a treadmill or even use a static cycle. Swimming is a low impact exercise and is ideal for everything — from weight loss and cardiac rehab. It also helps to recover from heart failure or artery ailments."

## ADULTS

Apart from keeping a body fit and toned, swimming brings a host of mental health benefits, which is needed to face

the responsibilities of adulthood. Dr Sheetal Rane, physiotherapist, Bhatia Hospital, says, "First and foremost, swimming enhances the release of endorphins in the body which can be called the body's happy hormones or the feel-good hormones. Increased levels of these compounds are known to lower stress and increase pleasure, and hence the name. These endorphins can help to lower anxiety and relieve depression."

The increased levels of blood flow caused by swimming enhances a person's cognitive functioning. It indirectly helps in improving memory, aids attention and concentration. "Research studies indicate that swimming helps in promoting and regulating positive emotions," says Namrata Dagia, clinical psychologist, The Illuminating Zone.

## KIDS

Experts unanimously opine that children who start swimming at a young age can reach their developmental milestones much earlier as compared to those who do not.

"It helps activate both the hemispheres of the brains as well as all the lobes, thus

One of the most fun ways of staying fit is through swimming. We zero in on a few more reasons why you should take it up



The buoyancy of water makes it a less harsh environment to work out for senior citizens and kids who learn swimming have better motor skills

helping better cognitive functioning as well as better learning abilities. Research has proven that children who can swim develop developmental milestones better and quicker than an average child when taught to swim at an early age. They also displayed better coordination skills and



other tasks related to mathematics," says Neeta V Shetty, psychotherapist, Blissful Mind Therapy Centre.

## WHO SHOULD OPT OUT?

Those with sensitive skin should generally stay away from public pools as much as possible. And as a measure to prevent spread of infections, those with skin rashes or fungal infections should not enter pools until they get well. Open heart surgery patients and those

## KEEP IN MIND:

- Give a gap of at least an hour after meals before hitting the pool
- Warm up and cooling down exercises are important. So, begin and finish your swim with low intensity exercises and at a slower pace.
- Stop swimming immediately in case you experience any kind of palpitations, chest pain or more, and seek medical advice as soon as possible.

with open wounds or ulcers should not use the pool until all surgical incisions or wounds are healed well. Speaking specifically about those suffering from blood pressure, Badr says, "The temperature of pool water will have least effect on one's heart if it is between 26 degrees Celsius to 33 degrees Celsius.

Therefore, it is better to swim in a temperature-controlled pool under proper guidance. Pools above 33 degrees Celsius may cause a drop in BP (blood pressure) and make feel lightheaded or cause fainting."

Other sensitive individuals are those with a history of asthma. "The smell of chlorine can aggravate asthma. So, asthmatics should take care," says Dr Amrapali Patil, weight management expert and founder, Trim N Tone, adding that those with epilepsy should preferably avoid this exercise, as a sudden seizure might jeopardise their life.

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# Fight allergy with the power of herbs



Sarojini Jose

With the rising levels of pollution and smog the city witnesses these days, it is not surprising that many are coming down with different kinds of allergies. "The number of fresh cases of asthma, bronchitis and breathing issues is on the rise, and the condition of people suffering from early on is going from bad to worse. Kids are easily falling prey to these ailments even as their immune systems are still building up," says Preety Tyagi, lead health coach and founder, MY22BMM. Concurring with Tyagi, Pooja Thacker, senior dietician, Bhatia Hospital, shares a figure that "in India 25% of the population is allergic to different forms of allergens".

For a quick remedy or since they have to be at work, schools or colleges, many resort to taking medicines. However, Mumun Ganeriwal, nutritionist and founder, Yuktahaar, advises against it. She says, "While antibiotics and the treatments that follow only drain you further, ancient Indian herbs are just what you need."

From the herbs that have a strong potency, are easy to get, simple to use and tasty, Ishita Biswas, nutritionist, Pristine Organics, has shortlisted few and tells us how they can be used.

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## CURRY LEAF

The curry tree is grown in hot and damp parts of India — mostly as a backyard tree.

**How it works:** These shiny aromatic leaves contain a glucoside named Koenign as the active ingredient. Curry leaves are very rich in essential nutrients like copper, minerals, calcium, phosphorus, fibre, carbohydrates, magnesium

and iron which enhance immunity and strengthen anti-inflammatory properties.

**Taste:** Bitter but aromatic

### Use:

- Decoction made by steeping the leaves in water. Consume half a cup daily
- Can be had as juice. Muddle 1-2 tsp fresh curry leaves and add lime juice and honey as per taste
- Eat eight to 10 leaves early morning for three months

## HONEYSUCKLE

Honeysuckle is cultivated in hill stations of India.

**How it works:** The leaves and flower of the honeysuckle plant contain an amorphous glycoside and salicylic acid. Tannins, inositol and luteolin are also present. All these components combined make

the honeysuckle plant a sweet and soothing medicine.

**Taste:** Sweet and cool

### Use:

- Raw: Can be eaten as a salad
- Tea: Drink tea made with dried honeysuckle
- Syrup: A thick decoction made by adding sugar and concentrating the solution

## MINT

Mint is one of the most commonly used herbs in the Indian kitchen.

**How it works:** Mint contains mint volatile oil, aliphatic acid, mint alcohol and menthol crystals. It induces perspiration, dispels fever, works against spasms and coughing, dispels mucous and functions as an antibacterial.

**Taste:** Sweet, cool, pungent

### Use:

- Raw: Fresh mint goes well with any salad
- Tea: Drink tea made from fresh mint leaves
- Decoction: Boil 1gm clove, 1gm mint, 2gm honeysuckle and 50ml water. Have it every day for at least five days

## DILL LEAVES

Dill is a very attractive herb, with dark green, almost feathery leaves and umbrella-like flowers, grown all over India.

### How it works:

The pinnate thin needle like leaves contain certain volatile oils like anethine, phalanderene, d-limonene, apiol and other sterephenes. These contribute to antioxidant properties,

soothing the nervous system for irritable symptoms and have an overall calming effect in the body.

**Taste:** Warm, with slightly bitter undertones

### Use:

- Condiment: Sprinkle dill over your food dishes, raita or chutney
- Decoction: Make by steeping the leaves in hot water. Consume half a cup daily

## ROSEMARY

Rosemary plant is becoming increasingly popular in Indian kitchens.

**How it works:** Rosemary contains a number of phytochemicals, including rosmarinic acid, caffeic acid, ursolic acid, betulinic acid, carnosic acid, and carnosol. They work mainly as antioxidants to fight against allergens, are detoxifying and give a comforting effect as well.

**Taste:** Warm, spicy, sweet

### Use:

- Condiment: Spring few rosemary leaves over any dish
- Tea: Drink tea made from fresh rosemary leaves
- Decoction: Make by steeping the leaves in hot water. Consume half a cup daily

# 'Yoga is my favourite activity'

## HEALTH-STRUCK WITH SONNALLI SEYGALL, ACTOR

Anjali Shetty

**Which is the one breakfast food that you must have?**

Almonds and walnuts soaked in water overnight and a sip of coconut oil. I consider it very healthy.

**One fattening food item that you just can't resist?**

I eat a lot of fattening food, like good fat, like ghee, coconut oil and avocados. I would say that an unhealthy food item that I cannot resist will be cupcakes and cheesecakes.

**How do you get back in shape post a fattening indulgence?**

I just work out a little bit extra and I go back to eating healthy. So, if believe if 90% of the time you are eating healthy, you can cheat the remaining 10% of the time. That's how I balance it. Even when I do cheat, I make sure I have a cup of hot water or green tea half an hour after eating.

**Do you prefer mini meals? What do they normally contain?**

Yes, I do prefer mini

to mid-sized meals. I have migraine issues. So, I prefer frequent meals and I think all of us should listen to our bodies and see what works for us. If you are hungry, you should not deprive your body of food. Mostly my meals contain a rice item — either dosa, poha or paratha made of rice flour. If I'm having light meals especially before my workouts, then it's usually sweet potatoes and peanut butter or almond butter. My lunch is mostly same, lots of rice with ghee, fish and vegetables or salad.

**A diet plan that always works for you?**

A diet plan that always works for me is a 'no processed preservative foods diet'. I completely stay off processed foods. What works wonderfully for my body and mind is that I'm not depriving myself of anything.

**Do you work out at home?**

I only work out at home when I am travelling or when I don't feel like going to the gym. I do a lot of bodyweight exercises and yoga.

**Do you prefer outdoor or indoor physical activity?**

I prefer outdoor activities any day but given the circumstances, sadly as there's so much of pollution, these days the outdoor conditions are not always ideal. Once in a while, I do go for a jog in the morning.

**Which are your favourite physical activities?**

My favourite physical activity is hands down, yoga, which all of my close ones know too. It's like the best drug for you.

**A health tip that you rely on.**

I'm a big foodie. So, I will never tell anyone to deprive themselves from eating something that they like so I think one should eat whatever they want. You must cut down on sugar.

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