- Eating customs

When you eat is as important as what you eat, say experts

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Busting myths around nutrition and eating, emphasising the importance of meal timings, giving practical tips on how to eat in an age of fast and ultra-processed food and underscoring the importance of balance and diversity — these and several other aspects were discussed at The Hindu's webinar on 'What, when and how we eat matter', held on Saturday, marking National Nutritional Week.

Bhuvaneshwari Shankar, clinical nutritionist and dietician, Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, one of the two panellists, told the audience that the time we eat is as important as what we eat. Eating on the go is a bad idea, she said.

"It takes 20 minutes for the brain to give us the signal that we are full," she said, explaining that chewing completely and taking time to eat one's meal is important.

Highlighting the role nutrition plays in health from the womb onwards, Usha Sriram, head of diabetes and endocrinology, TagVHS Hospital, Chennai, the other panellist, explained the need for a balanced diet during pregnancy, breastfeeding and nutritious diets for children, in order to avoid health complications and obesity in later life.

Answering questions from the audience, both panellists dwelled on the importance of ensuring good diets at a time when the market abounds with processed foods, and work hours can be long and stressful.

They spoke of the need to include fruits and nuts in the diet, as well as the need to move as much as possible, especially for those who have sedentary jobs.

If outside food could not be avoided, steamed options such as idlis and momos were a little better than deep-fried, caloriedense snacks, they said.

The webinar was moderated by R. Sujatha, independent journalist based in Chennai. The webinar can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/ live/m5JSIUJI9m4