



Adding egg or milk can reduce stunting in young children: study

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Bengaluru researchers say that animal product protein is better digested

- About 38% of children in India below the age of five years are stunted.
- Research suggests that the reason for this is that young children consume mainly cereal-based food, which lacks quality protein that can be well digested and is limited in the content of certain essential amino acids such as lysine.
- Researchers at St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru measured the digestibility and quality of commonly used complementary foods in young children and found that mung bean, which is a legume and is considered to be a high-quality protein source, is not as well digested and absorbed as other high-quality food proteins such as egg.
- The team found that the risk of stunting in children aged 1 - 3 years (in the National Family Health-4 survey) was reduced by 10% when high quality proteins such as egg and milk were consumed along with a combination of cereals and pulses.
- This food-based reduction of risk can be achieved by adding 200 ml of milk or milk products (including curd), an egg or 45 grams of legume (dal) to the daily diet of a child.
- If these foods are added to the diet of children aged less than two years, the risk of protein inadequacy reduces to 7% for egg, 8% for milk and 11% for legumes (dal).
- The researchers measured the essential amino acid digestion of four foods — rice, finger millet, mung dal and egg — commonly consumed complementary food by children below two.
- While the digestibility of essential amino acids was least for mung dal (65%), it was highest for egg (87%).
- It was 78.5% and 68% for rice and finger millet, respectively.

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