

Why Rajkummar Rao Is Telling People – ‘Aaj Se Thoda Kam’

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If you like your meals with sugar, salt and fat in generous amounts, then actor Rajkummar Rao has a message for you – ‘*aaj se thoda kam*’.

No, that’s not his film’s dialogue. That’s the tagline of the new campaign ‘Eat Right Movement’ launched by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Health Ministry. And Rajkummar Rao is its brand ambassador.

This campaign aims to reduce the sugar, salt and fat in packaged foods by 30 percent in the next three years. According to Pawan Agarwal, CEO of FSSAI, the purpose of this campaign is to raise awareness among people that sugar, salt and fat are not good for health and should be consumed in minimal quantities.

Dr Anoop Misra from Fortis Centre for Diabetes, Obesity and Cholesterol (C-DOC), says: *If the quantity of sugar, salt and fat is reduced in our food, more than half the health problems will be solved.*



FSSAI will issue guidelines for labeling of packaged foods in the next one year. Meanwhile, FSSAI has appealed to packaged food companies to voluntarily cut the quantity of sugar, salt and fat in their products. Fifteen packaged food companies, including Patanjali, Nestle and ITC, have come forward to support this campaign as of now.

Data shows that increasing use of sugar, salt and fat in Indians' meals is a matter of grave concern.

According to the World Health Organisation's latest data, the number of people dying due to non-communicable diseases (NCD) in India is 61 percent of total deaths.

A study published in the Indian Journal of Community Medicine in 2015 shows that 80 percent of NCD deaths happen from heart disease, cancer, respiratory problems or diabetes.

It also showed that the per capita consumption of sugar in India was 22 grams per day in 2000, which increased to 55.3 grams in 2010. Similarly, the per capita consumption of salt has increased to 12 grams per day. For fat, it was 21.2 grams per day in 2000, which increased to 54 grams per day in 2010.

Heart disease, respiratory problems and diabetes – all of these have a direct correlation with the amount of sugar, salt and fat we eat.

A major reason for Indians' increased intake of sugar, salt and fat is the popularity of processed foods.

India's food processing industry is the fifth largest in the world.



The government also has left no stone unturned in promoting this industry - by providing tax exemption to the industry, concession in their export, relaxation in import duty etc. But the result of this was that the people of India are becoming increasingly riddled with heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

Now it seems that the government has finally woken up. But will the 'Eat Right Movement' really change the situation on the ground and will Indians get safe and healthy food?

Dr Misra feels that any huge reform in India doesn't happen until a law is formed. *These diseases are growing rapidly in India, there's a dire need of such campaigns. But just launching a campaign and making a website for it is of no use unless the work is done at the grassroots level.*

Dr Anoop Misra

Dietician Rupali Dutta also supports this campaign. But she also raises concern. *This campaign asks companies to reduce the amount of sugar, salt and fat in packaged food. But the experience tells us that when companies decreased fat in America, the amount of sugar was increased to balance flavour. Now if they're asked to reduce sugar, salt and fat together, then they'll add something else for the flavour. And what*

that will be and how it will affect the body is hard to say, because only after a long time is it possible to know the side effects of something.

Rupali Dutta, Dietician



Will the 'Eat Right Movement' really change the situation on the ground?

The guidelines for labeling of packaged food are supposed to come out next year. In this context, Rupali Dutta says that companies should individually take up this responsibility and label the packaged foods accordingly with the amount of ingredients and serving size mentioned correctly.

According to her, the FSSAI should draft the guidelines and let the companies voluntarily adhere to them. She believes that the consumers should be made aware so that once the pressure starts coming from the buyer, the companies will be forced to reduce the amount of sugar, salt and fat.