

LETTER TO EDITOR

Effect of Seasonal Changes on Health

Sir,

Barring a few exceptions, health comes naturally to all of us, but it doesn't come free. We have to take care of it and preserve it constantly. There are a lot of factors that affect the health of individuals, families and, in turn, communities. One of the critical but unnoticed factors is seasonal change. While seasons keep changing all over the globe, people learn to adapt to the seasonal changes of their respective regions. All over the globe, there are four seasons in a year; the same is valid in Kashmir valley. But in Kashmir, different seasons offer unique patterns, and almost no other place has this kind of unique environment. There is a substantial change in day length, photoperiod and temperature with the changing seasons.

The spring season begins on 1st of March and ends on 31st of May. The day length is moderate, i.e. days and nights are almost identical. The positive thing about this season is that the temperature is moderate, and the day starts early. People engage in different agricultural activities and other routine works, and children play outdoors. It keeps the physical activity levels optimal. People also start doing morning and evening walks as morning/evening temperatures are not so low. Due to the temperature rise, many people who are otherwise afraid of consuming raw vegetables and taking fluids during the preceding winter season feel comfortable consuming these items. So the season helps them to consume a more healthy diet and be involved in a reasonable amount of physical activity.

The Summer starts on 1st June and ends on 31st of August. The weather is hot, days are very long and nights very short. All the environmental factors are feasible to take good care of one's health as people start their day at dawn and return after dusk. They do not have to worry about temperatures and clothing. People hit gyms, play outdoors, do daily household activities and go for morning/evening walks here and there. People's activity levels automatically elevate as the day length is almost 16 hours. Improvement in weather helps them maintain the amount of physical

activity/exercise they need to keep healthy. Moreover, they consume fluids, vegetables and fruits liberally, and their diet becomes beneficial and valuable.

The Autumn starts on 1st September and ends on 30th November. Day temperatures are moderate, but mornings and evenings are cold. Day length shortens, and most people skip morning/evening walks because of low temperatures. Most people's activity levels start decreasing as children and youth don't get enough time to play after returning from school/work. Except for the agricultural sector, the physical activity of folks comes down significantly.

The Winter starts on 1st of December and continues till the end of February. Days shorten further while nights lengthen, and there is a considerable decrease in the Photo period. Agricultural activities halt, and physical activity declines. People hardly go for exercise or any physical activity. Days start late and end early with chilly weather in the mornings/evenings. People prefer to stay indoors to keep themselves warm. Youth quit gyms and other physical activities as laziness engulfs them due to chilly temperatures. There is hardly any exposure to sunlight in the winters, which further adds to the burden of vitamin D deficiency in Kashmir here.

Therefore, we must be very conscious of our physical activity altering with the changing seasons, which may adversely affect our health. Unfortunately, only a small part of the population keeps themselves motivated to involve in physical activities, irrespective of the weather. Most people are unaware of the changing physical activity levels with changing seasons and hardly care about the same. The need of the hour is to make people aware of the same, especially those suffering from hypokinetic diseases like obesity and type 2 diabetes. While health awareness is essential, people need to be motivated to be physically active, especially during the Autumn and Winter seasons.

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