

Mothers, you can save our planet!

If we decide to make our meals in a socially responsible manner, our future generations will be thankful for the opportunity to live healthier and happier lives on the planet. You! takes a look...

EARTH

In a lot of households, mothers have the secret power to modify diet patterns of the entire families. While some moms follow a weekly meal plan, others ask their children or spouses for their food preference every day. A lot of children these days are picky eaters and instinctively, mothers want to see their children eat something rather than nothing at all. Ignoring this temptation is important and we should plan our meals that are healthy not only for humans but also for our planet. Experts suggest that production of red meat has harmful effects for the environment and we should shift towards plant-based diets. Introducing children to a plant-based diet might seem like a herculean task but you can make it into a fun activity by thinking slightly out of the box. Some ideas for children include barbecued cauliflower bites, pasta with broccoli, dairy-free cheese sandwich made with vegetables, fruit salad with yoghurt and so on.

Our little thoughtfulness can go a long way and we can make a huge difference by acting collectively to save our planet. If we decide to make our meals in a socially responsible manner, our future generations will be thankful for the opportunity to live healthier and happier lives in a planet which would be kinder to them. A few key principles for planning meals in a sustainable and environment friendly manner include lowering consumption of meat and dairy, avoiding processed foods with high sugar and fat content, using seasonal fruits and vegetables, incorporating beans and lentils in your menu, and not wasting food.

In a welcome development recently, Pakistan officially joined more than 80 nations who signed up for the US-led global methane pledge at the United Nations Climate Change Summit (COP26) this year. They agreed to cut methane emissions by 30 per cent by the end of this decade in an effort to tackle climate change. This is a significant step towards achieving the Paris Agreement's goal of preventing a temperature rise of 1.5°C above preindustrial levels.

However, one has to be cautiously optimistic regarding this pledge when Russia, China and India, who are major emitters of methane, are not part of this plan.



When some world leaders disappoint us, as responsible citizens of this planet, our mothers can commit to be cognizant of our methane footprint and make an effort to reduce it. Generally, carbon dioxide receives a lot of attention as a greenhouse gas but very few people talk about methane, which is also a major greenhouse gas. Methane is more than 25 times as potent as carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. According to an estimate, nearly 60 per cent of all methane emissions in the world come from human activities, which present an opportunity for us to take action against global warming. Managing methane emissions can be an important part of our strategy to fight climate change in the short-term to have immediate benefits for our planet. The main sources of human-activity related methane emissions are

agriculture and livestock, oil and gas industries, landfills, wastewater treatment, and emissions from coal-mines. Methane is produced by livestock such as cow, sheep, and goats as part of their normal digestive process. Humans engage in farming of these animals for food and other products, leading to increasing methane emissions because of these human-related activities. The emissions from beef and milk production represent 35 and 30 per cent of the livestock sector emissions, globally. With growing population and increasing demand of meat and dairy products, methane emissions are rising in our environment. Our atmosphere naturally deals with methane by destroying it as it reaches the stratosphere. Soil also acts as a natural sink for methane where it is processed by bacteria. The problem arises

when methane is produced faster than it can be destroyed. Since humans are responsible for excessive production of methane, it is also our responsibility to help our planet by reducing the methane emissions. Possible ways to achieve this include alternative feeds for cattle that inhibit or reduce methane emissions, reducing meat and dairy production, and reducing wasting of food. Another way to mitigate the problem is using biogas systems by transforming waste from livestock and food into energy. Biogas, instead of releasing methane into the atmosphere as a harmful greenhouse gas, converts it into clean and renewable energy source. In countries that have agriculture-dependent economies like India and Pakistan, discussions on cutting agriculture and livestock related methane emissions becomes a sensitive topic. However, these conversations are important because we cannot reach the desired goal of reducing greenhouse gases in our environment if we do not have support of the major methane-emitters. A recent study published last year quoted India as the third-largest source of methane emissions. India may not be consuming a lot of beef but it has a significant population of cattle which emits methane. A huge challenge for countries will be to implement policies to re-organise their agricultural models and convince millions of farmers to adopt the new ways that are friendly to our environment.

A special report on climate change and land by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) from August 2019 includes a policy recommendation to reduce meat consumption and mentions plant-based diets as a major opportunity for mitigating climate change. If industries are not bound to manage their methane emissions, then the citizens and consumers will have to take responsibility. One of the ways to reduce our methane footprint is to cut down on meat consumption, especially red meat. Eating less beef is beneficial for both, human health and our planet's health.

Moms, you can take steps now to rescue us! You cannot only help to reduce our existing methane footprint but also the potential future one by raising kids who learn to eat in a climate friendly and socially responsible manner. Perhaps we can start with baby-steps and commit to incorporate one key principle for sustainable meals, which is reducing our red meat intake.

People with higher optimism more likely to live 'exceptionally long lives'



ISLAMABAD: New research finds that individuals with higher optimism tend to live longer and also have greater odds of living 85 years and more. A recent PNAS paper describes how the researchers assessed the link between higher optimism and longer lifespan, with a particular focus on the chances of reaching "exceptional longevity." More recently, however, scientists have become interested in the role of nonbiological factors. "While research has identified many risk factors for diseases and premature death," says first and corresponding author Lewina O. Lee, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine, "we know relatively less about positive psychosocial factors that can promote healthy aging." What the study found For the analysis, the team brought together data on 69,744 females in the Nurses' Health Study (NHS) and 1,429 males in the Veterans Affairs Normative

Aging Study (NAS). The NHS data covered 10 years of follow-up between 2004 and 2014, while the NAS data included 30 years of follow-up between 1986 and 2016. Of the participants, 13% of the females died during the 10 years of their follow-up, and 71% of the males died in the 30 years of their follow-up.

Potential reasons for the effect of optimism Although the researchers did not investigate how optimism might help people live longer, they discuss some plausible reasons. One potential reason is that people with higher optimism are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote health, such as not smoking and being more physically active. Both of these behaviors can lengthen lifespan. Another factor that scientists have linked to higher optimism is the ability to regulate emotions more effectively. People who can do this recover from stressors more quickly. —Online



Eye tracking tests may predict Alzheimer's risk

ISLAMABAD: New research finds that eye tracking tests can accurately detect people who have a form of mild cognitive impairment that predisposes them to Alzheimer's disease. In fact, according to some studies, 46% of people with an MCI diagnosis go on to develop dementia within 3 years. By comparison, only 3% of adults of the same age experience Alzheimer's in the same time span. However, MCI does not always develop into full blown dementia. It often remains stable and sometimes the symptoms disappear completely with the person reverting to a normal, healthy cognition. Experts have divided MCI into two forms: amnesic (aMCI) and nonamnesic (naMCI). The former describes impairment that predominantly affects memory, whereas the latter affects other cognitive skills. Having aMCI raises the risk of Alzheimer's significantly more than naMCI. Detecting Alzheimer's as early as possible improves a person's brain health and may reduce their symptoms, especially if a reversible form of MCI is the cause. 'Eye tracking as useful diagnostic biomarker' Previous research has found that people with Alzheimer's show signs of eye movement impairment before any cognitive symptoms appear. The inability to direct the gaze in the appropriate direction often accompanies the very early stages of Alzheimer's, and standard eye tracking tests can reveal this sign of dementia. In the new study, Wilcoxon and team set out to use these eye tracking tests to detect MCI subtypes. As part of the research, the scientists asked the participants to complete antisaccade tasks. These are computer-based tasks wherein the participants must avoid looking at a distracting stimulus, such as a dot that appears at random points on the screen. "This research is extremely important" "Given that people with MCI are more likely to develop dementia due to [Alzheimer's] than cognitively healthy adults," add the authors, "and, in particular, that people with [aMCI] are at the highest risk of progressing to a full dementia syndrome, this may also offer an additional prognostic tool for predicting which people with a diagnosis of MCI are more likely to progress to [Alzheimer's]." —Online

Can the moon really influence your health?

ISLAMABAD: The moon has held the human mind in its thrall since the dawn of time. Throughout the ages, peoples across the world have worshipped it as an important deity, believing it held real power to influence their lives — and their health. But is this really true? In this Spotlight feature, we investigate. "The moon had been observing the earth close-up longer than anyone. It must have witnessed all of the phenomena occurring — and all of the acts carried out — on this earth," writes Haruki Murakami in 1Q84. The moon and menstrual cycles. Some people still refer to menstrual cycles as "moon cycles," and many remain convinced that there is a form of synchronicity between the phases of the moon and female menses. A myriad of webpages and smartphone apps purport to help you track your moon cycle or to achieve full synchronization between your menses and the phases of the moon. Some even advise readers on how to maximize their chances of becoming pregnant by taking moon phases into account. But is it true that the phase of the moon can influence fertility windows? This question is far from settled. —Online



WHO says these two drugs can help fight Covid: What to know

The World Health Organization (WHO) has revised its guidelines to strongly recommend the use of two drugs against COVID-19.

They recommend an enzyme blocker called baricitinib Trusted Source and a monoclonal antibody treatment called sotrovimab Trusted Source. As highly infectious Omicron variant COVID-19 renders many key treatments ineffective, a World Health Organization (WHO) panel has recommended using two more drugs against the virus.

The WHO guidelines, recently published Trusted Source in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), strongly recommend the use of baricitinib Trusted Source as an alternative to interleukin-6 (IL-6) receptor blockers, in combination with corti-costeroids, for people experiencing "severe or critical"

COVID-19. Baricitinib is an oral drug Trusted Source often used to treat rheumatoid arthritis. It works by blocking certain enzymes that can lead to inflammation. The WHO also gave "conditional recommendation" for using the monoclonal antibody drug sotrovimab Trusted Source in patients with non-severe COVID-19 and restricted its use for those at



highest risk of hospitalization.

Baricitinib was granted emergency use authorization by the Food and Drug Administration last July to treat hospitalized COVID-19 patients 2 years and older who need treatments that include supplemental oxygen or a ventilator. The WHO experts noted that baricitinib has similar effects to IL-6 blockers, and

when both are available, health-care professionals should choose based on cost, availability, and clinician experience. Joan Kapusnik-Uner, PharmD, and vice president of Clinical Content at First Data-bank (FDB), explained that IL-6 receptor blockers are a drug that blocks a protein called cytokine, which is produced as part of our immune response. In some people with COVID-19, the immune system can launch a "cytokine storm Trusted Source" that can be dangerous for the patient. She added that it also can activate "B cells where it importantly results in increased antibody production." According to WHO, these recommendations are based on evidence from 7 trials involving over 4,000 patients experiencing non-severe, severe, and critical COVID-19. —AFP