

# Idli-sambhar most nutritious breakfast: Study



**RISE & SHINE:** Nutritionists say rice and urad dal in idlis complement each other, making it a complete protein meal

Ekatha Ann John | TNN

**Chennai:** Three idlis, a bowl of sambhar and a tumbler of filter coffee — Chennai's traditional breakfast is not just a gastronomical delight for many but also the most nutritious morning meal among those found in India's metros.

'India Breakfast Habits Study', a survey conducted in four metros, found that Chennai has the best breakfast 'nutrient profile'.

The study covered other metros such as Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata on a sample size of 3,600 subjects, split across the 8-40 year age group, and described 'alarming' figures of nutritional inadequacy in our country.

"Although people in India are increasingly becoming health conscious, this doesn't reflect in their eating behaviour. Changing lifestyles and behavioural patterns result in meal skipping or inadequate food intakes, particularly at breakfast time," said Malathi Sivaramkrishnan, research director at Mumbai's Nirmala Niketan college of home science, who conducted the study funded by food MNC Kellogg's.

The nutrition scale was assessed based on the adequacy of carbohydrates, energy, proteins, fats and calcium. "While there have been many studies on the number of people skipping breakfast, very little has been done on the content of the meal and its nutritional value," said Malathi. The study found that 79% of those surveyed in Mumbai had nutritionally inadequate breakfasts, followed by Delhi and Kolkata at 76% and 75%. In Chennai only 60%

**A survey in four metros found that Chennai has the best breakfast 'nutrient profile', while Mumbai has the worst with 79% of those surveyed having nutritionally inadequate breakfast**

reported that their breakfast was nutritionally inadequate.

"Kolkata's traditional breakfast has excess maida which has a lot of carbohydrates, very little protein and no fibre at all. Delhi's parathas are too oily and Mumbai doesn't have a typical breakfast as such. People eat bread mostly, which just has carbohydrates," said Malathi.

Nutritionists say the nutrient value in rural areas down south is even greater as many of them consume ragi. "Ragi is rich in Vitamin B, fibres, protein, calcium, iron and phosphorus," said Meenakshi Bajaj, dietitian and coordinator at Academy of Clinical Nutrition, Madras Medical College.

She described the more popular idli and sambhar as a "complete meal".

"The rice and urad dal in idlis complement each other, making it a complete protein. The vegetables and dal in the sambhar are good supplements," she said. The study found that one in four Indians skip breakfast. Although the number of those skipping meals were fewer in Chennai, 'skimping' (eating inadequately) was more prevalent.