

I starved myself fat

In a bid to shed kilos, home-maker Tapati Karmakar fell prey to anorexia. The eating disorder brought with it other ailments, and excess weight, until she finally followed a healthy diet

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Tapati Karmakar would forcefully turn herself away from breakfast every morning. At lunch, she'd cautiously eat not more than two chapattis with vegetables and some rice. In the evening, she'd have tea if she was starving, or stave off food till dinner — another two chapattis with some rice. She avoided fruit completely.

All this was an effort to lose post-pregnancy weight. The 41-year-old weighed 56 kg before her first pregnancy in 1995, but in 2002, three children later, she weighed 80 kilos. The extra weight weighed on her mind. "My friends were slim," she says. "I used to look at them and wonder why I couldn't be like them. I didn't feel confident in social gatherings and constantly felt very bad about my appearance."

Raising three children meant cooking their lunch early in the morning, before they went to school; and helping them with homework during the day. All of which left her with no time for exercise. So she thought she would cut down on food instead.

So she developed anorexia, a psychological condition characterised by voluntary self-starvation. An anorexic person ignores hunger and controls the desire to eat so much so that he or she develops a subconscious aversion to food.

HUNGER'S STRIKES

Starvation sparked off a host of other physical conditions in Tapati, and did not result in weight loss at all. In fact, she gained weight. Spells of self-induced hunger slowed down her metabolism, so the body could not secrete enough digestive enzymes to help process, digest and absorb nutrients. Consequently, the food she ate was stored as fat.

Her growling stomach kept her awake at night. Lack of sleep dampened the production of the thyroid hormone which plays a major role in controlling body metabolism. Within three years, she developed symptoms of borderline hypothyroidism, which threatened to affect the functioning of the thyroid gland permanently.

It also affected her moods. Tapati would be irritable and exhausted all day long. She lacked energy to get up in the morning, and would be perpetually depressed. She couldn't concentrate on any task and would shout at her children when they asked



THEN

Tapati Karmakar weighed 80 kg in 2010 and now weighs 61 kilos



NOW

TAPATI'S NEW DIET

TAPATI'S PRESCRIBED diet contains protein, carbohydrate and fat in proportionate ratio of 20, 62 and 18 per cent. Phytoestrogen, plant based estrogen, was included in it as after 35, estrogen levels impact metabolic rate. The intake of green leafy vegetables and anti-oxidants through spinach, lemon, ginger, berries, pomegranate, etc. was increased to strengthen her immune system.

BREAKFAST	: Milk, oats and fruits within half-an hour gap.
BRUNCH	: A glass of buttermilk
LUNCH	: Roti, subzi, salad and chutney.
SNACKS	: Coconut water, pani-puri, bhel or chaat.
PRE-DINNER	: Soup
DINNER	: Same as lunch

her to make their favourite dishes. "I didn't have the energy to go to the stove and cook," she says. "It was too much of a task for me. I tried to keep my children happy by ordering food from outside."

Slowly, even cooking in the morning for tiffins became too arduous a task. "I would just tell

my elder son to get some biscuits from the market the previous evening for the next day's dabba," she says. Her husband, Sameer, would lunch at restaurants. "I thought she was irritated and tired because of managing three children," says Sameer. "I didn't want to add to her troubles."

Eventually, Tapati was unable to even go to the toilet, dress the children or pick them from school without being exhausted; climbing stairs made her breathless.

So Sameer took her to a doctor, and tests showed that Tapati had developed Vitamin B 12 deficiency, had high blood pressure, low haemoglobin count and type-2 diabetes. The diabetes was the result of high fluctuation in blood sugar levels.

THE TURNABOUT

The doctor prescribed medicines for the conditions but could not diagnose the root problem and recommend a healthy diet. So Tapati took seven tablets a day with her unhealthy eating habits. As a result, she soon developed severe acidity and constipation.

Seeing his wife on the verge of physical and mental breakdown, Sameer approached clinical nutritionist Dr Nupur Krishnan at BioLogics Nutrition Clinic. "I love her so much," he says. "I could not see what was happening to her day by day."

Initially, Tapati was treated for obesity, diabetes and unbearable leg pain. "We made a risk assessment on her physical and pathological parameters and discovered that she was starving herself," says Krishnan. The fat percentage in her body was 40 per cent; essential fat percentage for a woman is 12-15 per cent. This was probably the result of the medication prescribed earlier which interfered with the nutrition absorption capacity of Tapati's body and stored whatever little food she ate as fat.

Sameer played an important role in his wife's recovery. "We explained to him the importance of inculcating the right food habits," says Krishnan. "He had to ensure Tapati had breakfast and ate regularly in his absence." Small things such as her habit of swallowing food without chewing, were corrected.

Within 58 days of following her new diet, Tapati lost 6.5 kg. "I was shocked that I lost weight through eating," she says. After a year-and-a-half of sticking to it she lost 19 kilos and now weighs a healthy 61 kilos. Most importantly, her diabetes and blood pressure is under control. She no longer requires medication.

Now she religiously goes for a walk every morning. "I feel like I have taken a new birth," she says. "I cook for my children and husband, and don't take help from anybody for the housework. Now my friends say 'Pet bhar ke khati hai, phir kaise patli ho gayi?'"