

Public HealthEd

Lifestyle Medicine: A Personal Revolution



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LETTER

from the

EDITOR

“True wellness is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, mental, and social harmony.”

Welcome to our first edition. When we first envisioned this publication, our mission was clear: to bridge the gap between complex medical journals and the everyday conversations happening in our communities. We believe that health information shouldn't be locked behind technical jargon or academic paywalls. Knowledge is the most powerful tool for wellness, and it belongs to everyone.

In this issue, we dive deep into the philosophy of holistic health. For too long, the prevailing approach to medicine has treated the body as a collection of isolated parts. But we know that a person is not just a set of symptoms. Health is a tapestry woven from physical vitality, mental clarity, social connection, and environmental stability. When one thread is pulled, the entire fabric shifts.

Because health is holistic, our healthcare systems must follow suit through integrated care. Integrated healthcare means that your primary provider, your mental health specialist, and your community resources are all speaking the same language and working toward the same goal. It is about moving away from reactive "sick-care" and toward a proactive,

unified system that supports the whole human being.

Our goal is to provide you with the evidence-based insights you need to navigate your own health journey with confidence. Thank you for being a part of this community. Together, we are redefining what it means to be well.



Editor-in-Chief

Vaishnavi Bharadwaj

THE LIFESTYLE REVOLUTION

Chronic diseases—type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers—now account for the vast majority of global healthcare costs and premature deaths. The uncomfortable truth? Most of these conditions are not inevitable "glitches" in our biology, but rather the long-term biological consequences of how we live, eat, and move. We are in the midst of a personal revolution where the focus is shifting from the pharmacy to the lifestyle.



By Vaishnavi Bharadwaj

THE SIX PILLARS

Lifestyle medicine isn't about vague "wellness" trends; it is a clinical discipline defined by six evidence-based pillars. When applied, these pillars don't just manage symptoms—they can prevent, arrest, and even reverse chronic illness.

1. Whole-Food, Plant-Predominant Nutrition: Modern diets are often "calorie-rich but nutrient-poor." By prioritizing whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables, we provide our bodies with the fiber and phytonutrients necessary to dampen inflammation and fuel a healthy microbiome.



2. Physical Activity: We were built to move. Beyond "burning calories," regular movement regulates insulin sensitivity and boosts cognitive function. The goal isn't just the gym; it's a life less sedentary.

3. Restorative Sleep: Sleep is not "downtime"—it is a period of intense biological repair. Chronic sleep deprivation is a direct contributor to immune dysfunction and metabolic syndrome.

4. **Stress Management:** In an era of constant connectivity, our "fight or flight" response is stuck in the 'on' position. Learning to activate the parasympathetic nervous system through mindfulness or breathwork is a medical necessity, not a luxury.

5. **Social Connection:** Longevity studies, including the famous Blue Zones research, consistently show that community is a primary predictor of health. Isolation is as detrimental to the heart as smoking.

6. **Avoidance of Risky Substances:** Reducing or eliminating tobacco and excessive alcohol remains the lowest-hanging fruit in the quest for a longer healthspan.

Epigenetics: You Are Not Your Genes

For decades, many felt sidelined by their family history, believing that a "bad" genetic hand was a destiny. We now know better. Through the science of epigenetics, we understand that while your DNA is the blueprint, your lifestyle is the contractor. Your daily choices act as chemical switches, turning "on" protective genes and silencing those linked to inflammation and disease. You may have a predisposition, but lifestyle medicine gives you the power to change the outcome.

The Economics of the "Healthspan"

There is a critical difference between lifespan (how long you live) and healthspan (how long you live in good health). Our current system is expert at extending the former, often leaving patients in a state of "managed decline" for their final decades. By prioritizing prevention, we don't just save money—though the reduction in pharmaceutical and hospital costs is staggering—we save quality of life. The goal is to "die young as late as possible."

Conclusion: Taking the Reins

The new era of public health demands that we stop looking at the body as a collection of separate parts and start looking at the human as a whole being. Lifestyle medicine empowers the individual. It moves the center of healthcare from the sterile clinic into the kitchen, the park, and the community center.

Choosing prevention over cure isn't always the easiest path in a world designed for convenience, but it is the only path toward true, sustainable vitality. This is your personal revolution. Start today.

"The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patient in the care of the human frame, in diet and in the cause and prevention of disease." —
Attributed to Thomas Edison



FAT

OR

FIT?



By Dr. Srivats Bharadwaj

Walk into any room today and you will see it play out instantly. The slim person is assumed to be healthy. The heavier person is silently judged as unfit. It is one of the most deeply ingrained myths of modern health culture, and it is dangerously incomplete. For decades, we have equated appearance with health. Flat stomach equals fitness. Lean equals disciplined. Fat equals unhealthy. But medicine tells a very different story.

Globally, over 2.5 billion adults are overweight, and yet health outcomes within this group vary dramatically. More importantly, research has uncovered something counterintuitive: some people with higher body weight can be metabolically healthy, while some slim individuals may carry significant hidden risk.

This phenomenon is often referred to as the “obesity paradox,” where, in certain conditions, people with higher body weight show equal or even better survival outcomes than their leaner counterparts. So clearly, weight alone is not the full story.

The idea that appearance reflects health is increasingly being challenged by modern medicine. A growing category known as “TOFI” (Thin Outside, Fat Inside) describes individuals who appear lean but may carry high levels of visceral fat around their organs, along with insulin resistance, poor cardiovascular fitness, and elevated inflammatory markers. Research has even shown that normal-weight individuals with central obesity—particularly excess belly fat—may face a higher risk of mortality than some individuals classified as overweight. In simple terms, it is entirely possible to look fit while being metabolically unhealthy.

Conversely, there are people in higher weight categories who demonstrate strong cardiovascular endurance, healthy blood sugar and lipid levels, solid muscle mass, and low inflammation. This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as “metabolically healthy obesity,” highlights an important truth: fitness is not merely about fat, but about how well the body functions.

This broader understanding aligns with the World Health Organization definition of health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being,” rather than simply the absence of disease. Health, then, is not a number on a scale but a dynamic state of balance across body, mind, and environment. Importantly, no two bodies are the same. Each individual differs in genetics, hormonal responses, microbiome composition, lifestyle exposures, and stress patterns. Even commonly used measures like BMI are only rough estimates and fail to capture body composition or fat distribution accurately. As a result, comparing one body to another is not only unhelpful—it is scientifically flawed.



“The goal of medicine is to see its own end — where individuals no longer need intervention because they are truly well.”
— Dr. Srivats Bharadwaj

An often overlooked but critical component of health is the mind–body connection. Chronic stress, anxiety, poor sleep, and emotional burnout can elevate cortisol levels, promote visceral fat storage, disrupt metabolism, and reduce motivation for physical activity. Social pressures and body image expectations further shape health behaviors and long-term outcomes. In this sense, mental calm is not a luxury but a physiological necessity for metabolic health.

If outward appearance can be misleading, more meaningful indicators of fitness must be considered. True health is reflected in consistent energy levels, the ability to perform physical tasks like climbing stairs without breathlessness, and measures such as waist circumference, which better captures central fat risk than overall weight.

Muscle strength, metabolic markers like blood sugar, lipid profiles, and blood pressure, as well as the body’s ability to recover from exertion or illness, are equally important. Quality sleep, mental well-being, and sustainable physical activity patterns further signal systemic health, while inflammation markers such as C-reactive protein reveal underlying internal stress.

The core issue is that society often measures the wrong things—reducing health to weight, BMI, and appearance—when in reality it should prioritize function over form, consistency over extremes, and balance over obsession. Not everyone who looks healthy is truly healthy, and not everyone who appears unhealthy is unfit. Health is often subtle and internal, reflected in blood markers, breathing, sleep quality, and mental state. It is deeply personal and cannot be fully captured by outward appearance.



PCOS *and* LIFESTYLE

For many young women today, a diagnosis of PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome) or PCOD (Polycystic Ovary Disease) can feel confusing, overwhelming, and sometimes even frightening. Seemingly unrelated symptoms - irregular periods, sudden weight gain, acne, increased hair growth - can raise many questions.

PCOS is a hormonal condition that affects how the ovaries function. It can influence menstrual cycles, hormone levels, metabolism, and overall health. One of the key features of PCOS is hormonal imbalance, which can lead to irregular or missed periods, acne or oily skin, excess facial or body hair, and weight gain or difficulty losing weight.

In many cases, PCOS is also linked to insulin resistance, where the body has difficulty using insulin effectively. This can increase the risk of developing conditions like type 2 diabetes over time. PCOS is more common than many people realize — affecting a significant number of women, particularly in their teens and twenties.

Unlike some conditions that rely mainly on medication, PCOS is strongly influenced by daily habits. The way we eat, move, sleep, and manage stress can directly impact hormone levels and metabolic health. This does not mean that PCOS is caused by lifestyle alone. But it does mean that lifestyle changes can make a meaningful difference in managing symptoms and improving long-term health.

For many women, managing PCOS is not straightforward. Advice like “lose weight” or “exercise more” is often given, but it can feel frustrating or unrealistic. Many women with PCOS find that weight changes are harder to achieve, even with effort. There is also the emotional side of the condition — dealing with visible symptoms like acne or hair growth, managing irregular cycles, and worrying about future health or fertility. All of this can make PCOS feel like more than just a physical condition. This is why management needs to be practical, supportive, and sustainable — not restrictive or overwhelming.

The good news is that managing PCOS does not require extreme changes. In fact, small and consistent steps are often the most effective.



“You are not alone — PCOS is common and manageable. Focus on balance, not restriction, and seek support when needed.”

1. Balanced Nutrition:

Regular meals instead of skipping, including whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and proteins, reducing highly processed and sugary foods

2. Regular Movement:

Simple activities can help improve insulin sensitivity and support hormonal balance. Consistency matters more than intensity.

3. Sleep and Routine:

Irregular sleep patterns can affect hormones and metabolism.

4. Managing Stress: Simple strategies like taking breaks, talking to someone, or practicing relaxation techniques can make a difference over time.

PCOS is not only about periods or visible symptoms. It is also about long-term health. If not managed well, it can increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, or metabolic issues.

One of the most important things to remember is that PCOS management is not about perfection. Every person’s experience with PCOS is different. What works for one person may not work the same way for another. Seeking guidance from healthcare providers, asking questions, and understanding your own body can also make the journey easier.

PCOS: MYTH VS FACT



Myth: PCOS only affects older women

01

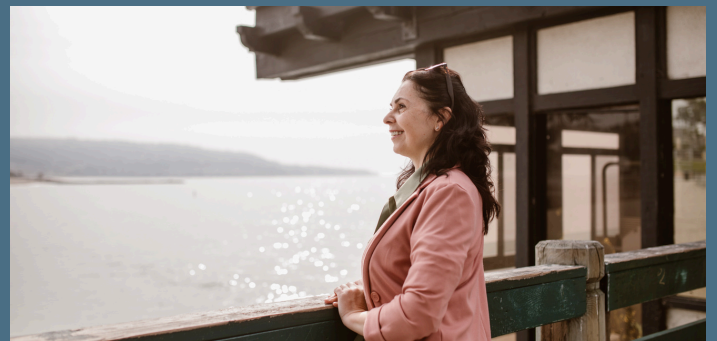
Fact: PCOS often begins in the teenage years or early 20s, but may go undiagnosed for a long time.



Myth: Irregular periods are normal and nothing to worry about

02

Fact: While occasional changes can happen, consistently irregular periods may be a sign of hormonal imbalance like PCOS.



Myth: PCOS is only about weight gain

03

Fact: PCOS affects hormones, metabolism, skin, and menstrual cycles — not just weight. Even women with normal weight can have PCOS.



Myth: You just need to lose weight to “fix” PCOS

04

Fact: Weight is only one part of the picture. Nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and stress all play important roles.



Myth: PCOS means you cannot have children

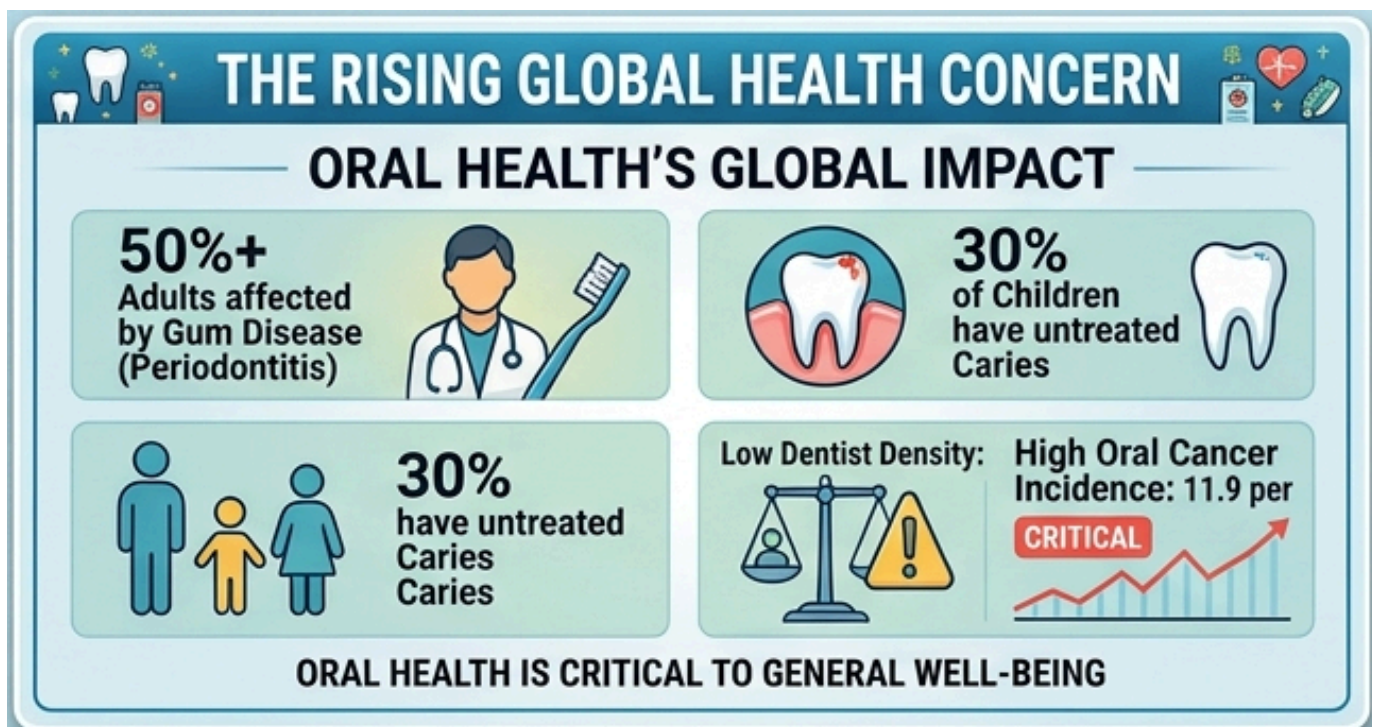
05

Fact: Many women with PCOS can and do have children, especially with early management and proper care.



The Rising



GLOBAL HEALTH CONCERN




Your mouth is the gateway to your body! Good oral health is essential for overall well-being, as gum disease and tooth decay have been linked to serious general health issues like heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.


THE RISING GLOBAL HEALTH CONCERN

INDIA: ORAL HEALTH IN NUMBERS

-  **50%+** Adults affected by Gum Disease (Periodontitis)
-  **30%** of Children have untreated Caries 
-  **Low Dentist Density:** 1 dentist per 10,000 people (WHO rec. 1:7500) 
-  **High Oral Cancer Incidence:** 11.9 per 100,000 people **CRITICAL** 

Data sourced from WHO & National Surveys



- 1. PREVENTIVE CARE:** Regular Checkups, Fluoride Use (Toothbrushes) 
- 2. PUBLIC EDUCATION:** Hygiene Awareness Campaigns (Speaker & Kids) 
- 3. DIET & LIFESTYLE:** Reduce Sugar Intake, Tobacco Cessation
- 4. EQUITABLE ACCESS:** Affordable Treatment in Rural Areas 
- 5. INTEGRATION:** Combine Oral with Primary Health Services 

A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR ORAL HEALTH

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE GLOBAL ORAL HEALTH & GENERAL WELL-BEING

HOLISTIC ROOTS:



MODERN RELEVANCE

By Dr. Srivats Bharadwaj

Medical science in India has a long and rich history. We are the land of Ayurveda, or the “Science of Life,” an ancient Indian system of natural, personalized, and holistic medicine. We are also home to two of the most influential medical treatises ever written. Both the Charaka Samhita, authored by the physician Charaka, and the Sushruta Samhita, written by the father of (plastic) surgery, Sushruta, date back to between 800 BCE and 1000 CE and have their origins in Ayurveda.



This 3,000-year-old science has gained immense global recognition for its holistic approach to health and well-being. It also offers one of the world's most comprehensive, non-invasive detoxification protocols—panchakarma—which aims to remove accumulated toxins from the body and help individuals regain their natural constitutional balance.

On the other hand, modern medicine—though relatively newer in India—has contributed immensely to patient care and public health. The country's average life expectancy has increased significantly, while infant and maternal mortality rates have declined. We have been able to curb the spread of diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, and HIV, while also advancing treatment and care for conditions like cancer.

India's Universal Immunization Programme is recognized as one of the largest public health initiatives in the world, successfully controlling many communicable diseases, including smallpox and polio. In addition, the modern medical fraternity in India has consistently advanced research and innovation, supported by technological progress over the past two decades.



Consider a few examples. Geneticist Arun Kumar and psychiatrist Satish Girimaji of NIMHANS, Bengaluru, collaborated to identify a key fifth gene (STIL) associated with microcephaly, a disorder characterized by reduced brain size and developmental challenges. TruNAT Rif, a diagnostic technology developed by Indian researchers, has significantly improved tuberculosis detection through sputum testing. In another collaborative effort between St. John's Medical College in Bengaluru and McMaster University in Canada, researchers developed a polypill capable of addressing multiple heart conditions.

Fostering Parallel Streams of Medicine to Become a Medical Superpower

Across the country, multi-specialty hospitals now offer advanced diagnostic tools, intervention facilities, and comprehensive care. With a skilled medical workforce and relatively low-cost treatment options, India is rapidly emerging as a global destination for health and wellness tourism, accounting for nearly 18% of the global medical tourism market. The healthcare industry itself is projected to grow into a USD 9 billion market in the near future.

At the same time, the rising global interest in Ayurveda has significantly boosted the wellness tourism sector, attracting people from around the world. Ayurveda is projected to become a ₹30,000 crore industry in India. Notably, the World Health Organization has announced the establishment of a Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in India, further reinforcing the global relevance of our traditional systems. Clearly, the world is looking to India for a scientifically grounded, holistic approach to healthcare rooted in Ayurveda.



Given this unique advantage, it is important to question recent policy decisions, such as the authorization allowing post-graduate Ayurveda practitioners to integrate into mainstream surgical practice. This move raises several important concerns and potential risks for both systems of medicine.

To begin with, questions arise regarding infrastructure and resources. What equipment and facilities will be used for such procedures, especially when most Ayurvedic institutions may not be equipped for complex surgeries? Will Ayurvedic practitioners rely on allopathic anesthesia, and if so, how will this align with the foundational principles of Ayurveda? What medications will be used for pre- and post-operative care?

Modern pharmaceuticals are often laboratory-produced chemical or biologically engineered compounds designed for targeted treatment and symptom relief—an approach that differs fundamentally from Ayurveda's natural and holistic philosophy. Similarly, concerns around infection control, surgical protocols, and training standards must be carefully addressed.

If Ayurvedic practitioners are expected to adopt allopathic surgical methods, it raises a broader question: what then distinguishes the two systems? There is also an underlying concern that insufficient training in modern surgical techniques could affect treatment outcomes and compromise patient safety, potentially bringing disrepute to both Ayurveda and modern medicine.

The foundational principles of diagnosis, treatment planning, and care delivery in Ayurveda are fundamentally different from those in modern medicine. Ayurveda's strength lies in its ability to offer personalized, preventive, and holistic care based on an individual's constitution and balance of energies. This approach has shown significant impact, particularly in managing chronic conditions.

Modern medicine, on the other hand, excels in acute care, emergency interventions, and evidence-based treatment of complex diseases. Both systems have distinct strengths, and both play essential roles in healthcare.

Ayurvedic practitioners can and should engage with surgical practice, especially considering that the origins of surgery itself can be traced back to ancient Ayurvedic knowledge. However, this must be approached with rigor, ensuring that training, methodology, and practice remain aligned with Ayurvedic principles.



To support this, there is a need for greater investment in research across Ayurveda's core areas, including physiology, pathology, pharmacology, and pharmaceuticals. Strengthening empirical validation, standardizing drug development, and improving quality control will be critical in elevating Ayurveda as a credible, evidence-backed, and autonomous field of medicine that can exist alongside modern medical science.

Let the Power of Choice Rest with the Patient

Both Ayurveda and allopathy have their own strengths and limitations.

India holds the unique distinction of nurturing two rich, expansive, and highly evolved systems of medicine. We have the knowledge, expertise, and capacity to offer patients meaningful choices between these approaches.

It is now the responsibility of policymakers and the medical community to preserve the authenticity, integrity, and distinct value of each system. By doing so, we can ensure that both Ayurveda and modern medicine continue to contribute effectively toward the shared goal of healthcare: improving patient outcomes, enhancing quality of life, and reducing suffering.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

By Vaishnavi Bharadwaj

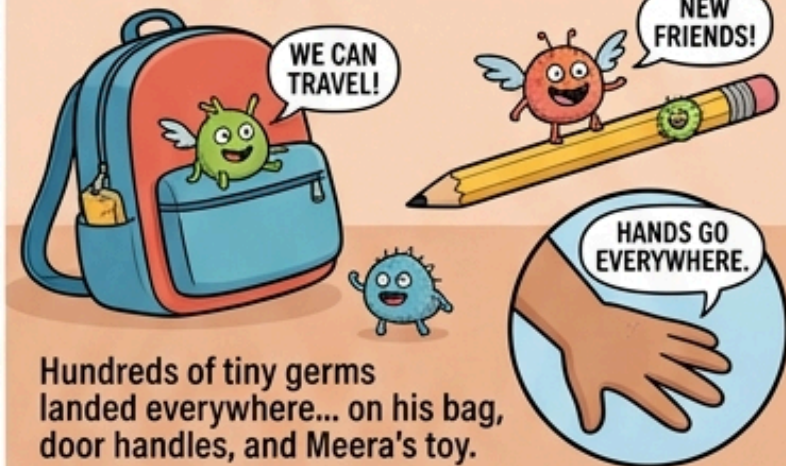
The Sneaky Sneeze -
Part 1: The Tiny Travelers

THE SNEEZE!

One sunny morning, Aarav didn't wash up and sneezed!



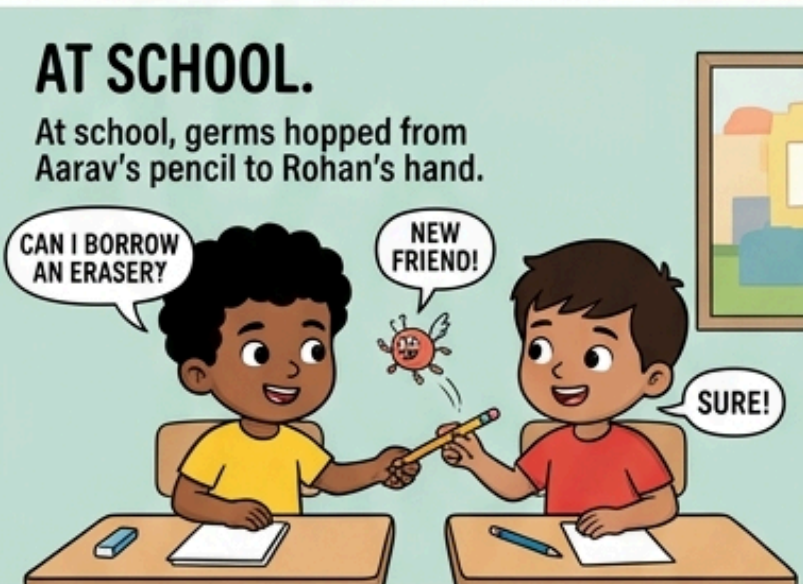
THE SPREAD!



Hundreds of tiny germs landed everywhere... on his bag, door handles, and Meera's toy.

AT SCHOOL.

At school, germs hopped from Aarav's pencil to Rohan's hand.



LUNCHTIME.

Sharing snacks and drinks spread germs even farther... desk to desk!



EVENING.

Back at home, Aarav felt sick. "I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD."



CHILDREN'S CORNER

By Vaishnavi Bharadwaj

The Sneaky Sneeze -
Part 1: The Tiny Travelers

THE HYGIENE HERO ARRIVES!

A soft glow filled the room... Hygia, the Hygiene Hero, arrived to help!



HYGIA'S LESSON.

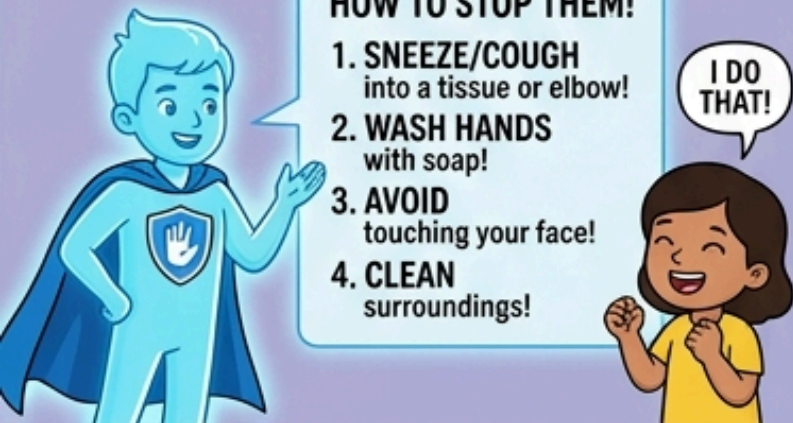
She showed Aarav how invisible germs travel quickly from hands to objects.



STOP THE SPREAD!

HOW TO STOP THEM!

1. **SNEEZE/COUGH** into a tissue or elbow!
2. **WASH HANDS** with soap!
3. **AVOID** touching your face!
4. **CLEAN** surroundings!



NEXT MORNING... HERO HABITS!

The next morning, Aarav started a new routine.



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