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FOOD COLOR ADDITIVES

Food colors or food dyes are used to add color to foods, medicines and cosmetics. Food colors can be made from either natural or synthetic sources.

NATURAL FOOD COLORS

Natural food colors, derived from vegetables, minerals and animals sources, are called 'exempt colors'. These colors are considered safe, and do not undergo intense scrutiny by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is responsible for protecting public health through supervision of food safety.

ARTIFICIAL FOOD COLORS

Artificial food colors are made with chemicals in the lab. These synthetically made colors must undergo strict processes, and are tightly regulated by the FDA to ensure safe use.

FOODS WITH ARTIFICIAL FOOD COLORS

Processed food items such as confectionary, ice creams, flavoured milk, soft drinks, processed fruit juices, breakfast cereals, candies, desserts, sweetmeats (mithai), jams and jellies, are all foods that contain color additives. Food colors might also be added to items such as cured meats, pickles and sauces etc., and it is important to read food labels to identify any such additions.

READING FOOD LABELS FOR COLOR IDENTIFICATION

FDA requires food manufacturers to list all ingredients on the nutrition label. All certified color additives are labeled with a code (e.g. FD&C Blue No.1 or FD&C Green No.3) and are collectively listed as "artificial colors". Consumers can identify a color additive by reading the ingredients on the food packaging.

EFFECT OF FOOD COLORS ON YOUNG CHILDREN

Food colors used according to FDA regulations are generally considered safe. However, some evidence suggests that children might be

affected by artificial food colors which may lead to hyper active behaviours. Therefore, it is recommended that parents focus on natural sources of foods to prevent exposing their children to food colors.

FOOD COLOR ADULTERATION

Globally and locally, food safety concerns are on the rise due to use of substandard colors in foods. Additionally some regulated food colors have also been found to cause cancer or harm the body in other ways.

SITUATION IN PAKISTAN

Due to lack of stringent food security regulations in Pakistan, the quality of colors used in food locally is questionable. There have been reports of addition of textile dyes and grinded red brick powder in the media, so caution in consumption is recommended.



References:

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