



The Committee set up by WCD Ministry on Consumption of Junk Food by School Children and its availability to them, submits its reports

Recommends banning sale of junk food to children in and around schools

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The Committee, constituted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to look into the issues related to growing problems of obesity in children and its relationship with consumption of junk food, has submitted its report.

The Ministry had constituted the Committee this year under the Chairmanship of Director, National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad on matters relating to availability of junk food in myriad forms at various places accessible to children. The members of the Committee included representatives from Neeti Ayog, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Department of AYUSH, Ministry of HRD, Bureau of Indian Standards, FSSAI, National Institute of Public Cooperation & Child Development, ICMR and independent experts in the field of nutrition and clinical psychology/ behavioural science. The Committee submitted its report this week.

The members of the Committee have expressed concern about the increasing incidence of obesity in children and the related physiological issues including diabetes, hypertension etc. They have also given details of consequences of increasing psychological/behavioural dysfunctionalities in children including binge-eating, body dis-satisfaction, low self-esteem etc.

The Committee has comprehensively reviewed the prevalent practices of regulation of junk food in 23 countries across the world and has also examined the legislative/institutional framework available in India. Based on their study, a number of recommendations have been made. The Committee has suggested a comprehensive definition of junk food in the context of children and has suggested that all food items falling in the definition of junk food should be banned in the school canteens. It has also suggested that vendors/street vendors should not be permitted to sell these foods during school timings in a vicinity of 200 meters from any school. They further suggested that shops and restaurants selling food within 200 meters of a school should not be permitted to sell these foods to children in school uniforms. They have further suggested that a list of desirable food items to be offered in the school canteen. Recommendations have also been made for labelling of pre-packaged food stating clearly as "unfit for infant/children/pregnant and lactating mothers or persons with specific ailments".

A number of recommendations have been made regarding modification of school health card to include nutrition related aspects and that the School Health Programme should be renamed as School Health and Nutrition Programme. The Committee has given detailed recommendations regarding establishment and management of school canteen and comprehensive advertisement/ promotion campaign to be undertaken jointly by different stakeholder ministries. The Ministry of Women and Child Development is examining the report.

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