

Junking Junk Food

December 17, 2019

Source: RSTV, Economic Times, NDTV

Manifest pedagogy: Junk food is a major threat for the future of the next generation. The adverse consequences of junk food on human health is already apparent. This is going to further increase with time. The regulatory measures being taken by the government to curb junk food are important for both prelims and mains.

In news: Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has notified a draft regulation aimed at prohibiting the sale and advertisement of food rich in fat, sugar, and salt to schoolchildren inside the school premises and within 50 m around it

Placing it in the syllabus: Health

Dimensions:

- What is Junk Food?
- Health effects of Junk Food
- Laws for Junk Food Regulation
- FSSAI Draft on Junk Food
- Problems with implementation
- Way forward

What is Junk Food?

There is no proper definition for junk food in India, therefore following definitions can be considered as per the draft regulation of FSSAI

- **Junk food is generally understood as food rich in sodium/glucose/sugar and is responsible for causing dental cavities/obesity/heart diseases.**
- **Generally,** junk foods are defined as processed foods

with negligible nutrient value and are often **high in salt, sugar, and fat**. These foods are prepared in a way that they look appealing and are enjoyable so you are chemically programmed to ask for more.

- The regulation defines High Fat, Salt, Sugar food (HFSS) as “deep-fried foods, for example, French fries, fried chips, samosa, chole bhature, gulab jamun, sugar-sweetened carbonated or non-carbonated beverages, ready-to-eat foods, noodles, pizzas, burgers, confectionary items, sugar, and sugar-based products.”

Health effects of Junk Food

- **Obesity:** The most common side-effects of consuming junk foods is increased obesity. It's composition of loads of sugar, calories and fats contribute to weight gain. Obesity may lead to many medical issues like diabetes, joint pain, and heart diseases. According to a July 2017 study, India, with 14.4 million, had the second most number of obese children among 195 countries.
- Impact on digestion and consumption of food: Consumption of excess junk food leaves the brain in a dilemma. Excessive sugar intake can cause blood sugar level to fluctuate and makes the brain demand more food, which eventually leads to overeating and indigestion.
- **Depression:** Junk foods contain high sugar and fats that can cause certain chemical reactions in the brain which affect its functioning. By consuming too much of it, the body loses essential nutrients and amino acids. These symptoms eventually lead to the inability of the brain to deal with stress and may lead to depression
- **Cancer:** Some of the junk foods have been found to contain carcinogens, which can cause cancer
- **Inadequate Growth & Development:** Consuming junk food leads to deficiency of essential nutrients and vitamins required for the proper growth and development of the body. Excess intake of soda and sugar may cause tooth

decay and weakening of bones.



Laws for Junk Food Regulation

The food laws in India include the following:

- **Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954:** This act prevents adulteration food products
- **Food Safety and Standards (“FSS”) Act, 2006:** It is the primary law for the regulation of food products. This act also sets up the formulation and enforcement of food safety standards in India.
- **Fruit Products Order, 1955:** The Fruit Products Order 1955, promulgated under Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act – 1955, with an objective to manufacture fruit & vegetable products maintaining sanitary and hygienic conditions in the premises and quality standards laid down in the Order.
- **Meat Food Products Order, 1973:** It provides for sanitary and other requirements, limits of heavy metals, preservatives, insecticides, residue, etc., for meat food products.
- **Vegetable Oil Products (Control) Order, 1947:** It regulated the manufacture, distribution, and sale of Vegetable Oil Products
- **Edible Oils Packaging (Regulation) Order 1988:** It was promulgated under the Essential commodities act, 1955 in order to make the packing of edible oils at predetermined prices, sold in retail, mandatory with an exception of being exempted by the concerned state government.

FSSAI Draft on Junk Food

- **Ban on junk food sale in schools:** The draft regulation proposes a ban on sale as well as advertisements of junk foods in school canteens and within 50 metres around

school campuses as part of its objective to ensure safe and wholesome food for children.

- **Ban on advertisement:** The food business operators (FBOs) manufacturing HFSS food products would be barred from advertising such foods **in school premises or within 50 meters of the school campus**
- **Registration or license:** **The school authority itself or food business operators (FBOs)** contracted by it and FBOs contracted by Department of School Education for the operation of the mid-day meal scheme will have to “obtain a registration or license” as applicable and **comply with the requirements of sanitary and hygienic practices specified under the food safety law.**
- **Eat Right School:** The FSSAI has proposed that **school authorities will have to adopt a comprehensive programme for promoting safe food and healthy diets among school children.** The school campus should be converted into ‘Eat Right School’ focusing safe and healthy food, local and seasonal food and no food waste as per the specified benchmarks.
- **Promotion of consumption of a safe and balanced diet:** Encourage school authorities to promote the consumption of a safe and balanced diet in the school **as per the guidelines issued by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN).**
- The school authorities would have to ensure that FBOs supplying prepared meals on the premises are on the basis of general guidance provided in the regulation and as per the direction issued by the Food Authority or the Commissioners of Food safety.
- **Experts:** Nutritionists, dietitians must be engaged by the school administration to assist in the preparation of the menu for the children, periodically.
- BOs to support healthy eating in schools and not market, sell, or give away low- nutrition foods anywhere on the school campus, including through logos, brand names, posters, textbook covers, etc.

- **Regular inspection:** It also prescribes regular inspection of premises to ensure that safe, healthy and hygienic food is served to students
- **A sub-committee by the State Level Advisory Committee:** The FSSAI proposes the creation of a sub-committee by the State Level Advisory Committee to monitor the implementation of these regulations and to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food to school children
- Taking forward its **“Eat Right” campaign**, the Centre has **banned the sale of pre-packaged foods which “are referred to as foods high in fat, salt and sugar”** to school children in “school canteens/ mess premises/ hostel kitchens or within **50 metres of the school campus”**
- **Prohibition on Vendors:** The regulation **prohibits food manufacturers and food vendors from handing out free samples of low-nutrition food to children at sporting events.** Such entities are also forbidden from using their logos on vending machines, books, school supplies, textbook covers, school property like scoreboards and signs.
- **Food business operators:** It also says that schools will no longer get sponsorship for events from food business operators, a move seen curbing incidents of food business operators using their logos on banners at field meets or as wallpapers on school computers and in school canteens
- **Menu for the school cafeteria and daycare centres:** Schedule I of the regulation suggests food groups like milk, eggs, chicken, paneer, fish, low-fat or toned milk, and fortified cereals. It says that white bread, packaged soups, and wraps should be discouraged

Problems with implementation

- **Proper implementation: Enforcing this regulation would**

be a challenge, for example, there is a ban on the sale of tobacco products(2013) within 100 yards of a school but a cursory check of schools around us will, unfortunately, show that this rule is not enforced in all its strictness.

- **Implementing these guidelines at home:** While the prevention of sale of junk foods near schools can help curb the unhealthy snacking tendencies among school children, ensuring control over the urge to consume junk food at home will require greater awareness drives where the government will have to focus on healthy eating.

Thus, snacking at home also requires strict supervision by parents ensuring that children eat nutritious, unprocessed food, and also engage in outdoor and physical activities.

Way forward

- Cultivating eating good food among the children and developing awareness
- Printing the side effects of junk food on the food packets
- Coordinated effort and approach with the involvement of society and parents as well
- The backing of a law to ban junk food and plugging the escape routes