

Greater **Kashmir**

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Aerated drinks, junk food to be banned in school canteens

Excessive and regular use of aerated and energy drinks may lead to hypokalemia, hallucinations, stroke, paralysis, diabetes, cardiovascular disease

Sri Nagar: In a decision that may have far reaching benefits for health of children in J&K, the state Drug and Food Control Organisation (DFCO) is all set to ban sale of junk foods and aerated drinks in school canteens following a directive from the union health ministry.

Controller DFCO Lotika Khajuria told speaking to Greater Kashmir that a notification to ban sale of junk foods and aerated drinks from all schools of J&K would be issued soon.

“We have received directions to ban sale of all such food items that are known to cause health issues in children at school canteens. Very soon, a formal ban order will be issued,” she said.

Earlier this week, Union ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW), said in Lok Sabha, that states, including J&K have been directed to ensure that no aerated drinks and foods high in saturated fats are available in school and college canteens.

“Excessive and regular use of aerated and energy drinks may lead to hypokalemia, hallucinations, stroke, paralysis, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, etc.,” it said.

Last year, an 11-member expert committee of Food Safety and Standards Association of India (FSSAI) had recommended restricting sale or availability of foods high in fat, salt or sugar content in or around 50 meter radius of schools. However, this is for the first time that such a ban will be enforced in J&K.

Controller DFCO said that action, as mandated against FSSAI rules, would be taken against the violators.

FSSAI IN NEWS

“Our ground staff is empowered to take action if any of the provisions of FSSAI or directions from the state DFCO is violated by any food business operator,” she said.

“Schools will be mandated to sell, wholesome, nutritious foods and this will have a positive effect on the health of our children,” Khajuria said.

Officials in DFCO said that after the ban, schools will not be allowed to sell aerated drinks (cola), high sugar drinks, potato and other chips, wafers, samosas, pakodas, sweets, burgers, etc.

The FSSAI is also in the process of drafting a regulation titled Food Safety and Standards (Safe and Wholesome Food for School Children) Regulations, 2018, in a bid to make children develop healthier food habits.

As per this regulation, if a school authority, without reasonable grounds, fails to comply with the provisions under these regulations, the State Food Authority shall take up the matter with the concerned education department and/or affiliation body to take appropriate action.

J&K has been grappling with growing incidence of obesity and lifestyle diseases. As per a survey by the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), one out of three school going children was either over-weight or obese in Kashmir.

“Our Kashmir studies have shown that among school going children, 24.7 percent were over-weight and 11.5 percent were obese. That makes 36.2 percent of our children either over-weight or obese,” said Dr Shariq Rashid Masoodi, senior endocrinologist at the SKIMS