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Alert! FSSAI may ask edible oil companies to cut transfat content to just 2%

Transfat, mainly the artificial transfat, that you are consuming unknowingly, is sourced from the cooking oil that is used to prepare them. Artificial transfat raises bad cholesterol and lowers good cholesterol and is estimated to kill 5,40,000 people a year around the world and 60,000 in India.



Indian delicacies, which includes Mughlai dishes, foods Punjabi dishes, South Indian, Indianized Hakka, east Indian dishes and typical north Indian foods like paranthas and chhole bhature, have the power to make everyone salivate non-stop. They are undoubtedly delicious. But, have you ever questioned the health implications of these lip-smacking delicacies? Well, the point of concern is that with these food delicacies, you are also consuming copious quantities of transfat, which is abundantly harmful for all concerned.

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Actually, this transfat, mainly the artificial transfat, that you are consuming unknowingly, is sourced from the cooking oil that is used to prepare them. Artificial transfat raises bad cholesterol and lowers good cholesterol and is estimated to kill 5,40,000 people a year around the world and 60,000 in India.

Currently, there is no regulation that can force or direct the oil or ghee companies to limit the transfat content in the oil being manufactured by them. But the good news is that Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is looking to come up with a plan that will ask these companies to reduce transfat limit to 2 per cent soon. The amount of this artificial transfat can be reduced during processing. FSSAI says that the oil and ghee being sold in India, at present, have 5 per cent content of transfat, which is harmful to health.

Therefore, the FSSAI is planning to send oil and ghee for sampling test after interacting with the oil manufacturing companies. Later, it will be taking a decision to reducing the transfat limit in oil/ghee.

"Earlier, there was a 40 per cent transfat content in the oil, which was reduced to 5 per cent a couple of years back, but doctors suggest that this limit is also too high. Transfat content has a limit in foreign countries and there are countries where the content goes down to zero. Therefore, WHO recommends every country, including India, to ban food items with transfat. Soon, after sample-testing the oil, we will be deciding on whether the oil companies should be asked to reduce the transfat to 2 percent or not. However, companies say that they do not have any advanced technology to reduce transfat," says Pawan Kumar Agarwal, CEO of FSSAI.

Ban on food items with transfat by 2023

World Health Organisation (WHO) for long has tried to eliminate industrially produced transfat. It says around 5 lakh people die annually due to cardiovascular disease, which is caused mainly due to transfat intake. Transfat is a kind of artificial fat and is found mainly in processed food items, vegetable oils, dairy products and fast food. Transfat is used in these food items to increase the shelf-life of the processed food.

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Early this week, the World Health Organisation (WHO) in its release said that it aims at banning the food items with transfat. This ban will come into force by 2023. For the purpose, it released REPLACE, a step-by-step guide for the elimination of industrially-produced trans-fatty acids from the global food supply. REPLACE, which is an acronym for Review, Promote, Legislate, Assess, Create and Enforce, is the first global initiative to eliminate a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Secondly, there are countries that have banned the hydrogenated oils, the main source of artificial transfat.

What is Transfat?

Trans fat is a type of unsaturated fat that is available in two forms and they are natural (available in small amounts) and artificial (industrially produced from vegetable fats). Natural transfat is present in balanced quantities in animals and food items sourced from them and they are not harmful to human body, while the artificial transfat carries an increased risk of coronary artery disease along with it.

Trans fat can lead to diseases

"Food items made from transfat are delicious but are harmful to health. Food with transfat content can't be digested easily and leads to fat deposition in the different part of the stomach and increases cholesterol and leads to obesity as well as kidney and heart diseases," says Dr Manjari. She added, "you cannot understand how trans fats can weaken you internally but you can take care of it by taking care of your dietary lifestyle".