

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Ethylene gas can be used for fruit ripening: FSSAI report

TNN | Sep 4, 2018



HYDERABAD: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has now come out with a new guidance note on artificial ripening of fruits to check use of cancer-causing chemicals. The guidance note has prohibited direct contact of ethylene gas with fruits to ensure that there is no chemical contamination. It has, however, permitted use of ethylene gas as an artificial ripener. Acetylene gas is not permitted for ripening of fruits.

The guidance note comes in the wake of complaints of unchecked use of harmful chemicals for artificial ripening of fruits in Hyderabad and other parts of the country. Hyderabad has one of the biggest fruit markets in the country and recent raids by police and other enforcing authorities revealed use of banned chemicals. Some of the chemicals can affect the brain and nervous system, besides digestive system, kidneys and skin.

WATCH WHAT YOU BITE

- > Always buy fruits from reputed shops
- > Verify if the fruits are ripened using harmful chemicals
- > Wash fruits in running water to remove chemical residue
- > Do not buy fruits with black blotches on skin
- > Natural way of ripening fruits is through dry haystack
- > Avoid fruits with shining skin

WHAT THE GUIDANCE NOTE SAYS

Ethylene is permitted for artificial ripening provided if the concentration does not exceed 100 ppm (parts per million). It is a hormone produced naturally within the fruits to stimulate ripening process, it does not pose any health hazards to consumers

The guidance note reiterates that use of carbide or acetylene gas is prohibited for artificial ripening of fruits as they cause damage to health. The note is based on the Food Safety and Standards Regulations, 2011.

Ethylene is permitted for artificial ripening provided if the concentration does not exceed 100 ppm (parts per million). Ethylene plays a vital role in the natural ripening of fruits. It is a hormone produced naturally within the fruits to stimulate ripening process. Ethylene, being a natural hormone, does not pose any health hazards to consumers, the guidance note points out.

According to the guidance note, external application of ethylene gas generated from various sources such as ethylene gas cylinders, compressed ethylene gas, ethanol, ethephon, etc. can be used to ripen fruits. However the fruits should be wrapped in paper to prevent direct contact with the gas.

It has advised people to buy fruits from reputed stores or fruit sellers if they declare that no harmful chemicals were used to ripen fruits.

The FSSAI has emphasised on the ban on harmful chemicals as fruits are part of essential daily nutrients for a healthy living. Moreover, these chemicals tend to stay in the body for longer periods and cause severe health issues ranging from simple skin rashes to burning sensation in stomach to severe problems like cardiac and kidney ailments to cancers.

The new guidance note also talks about standard operating procedures. "Ripening of fruits is a combination of physiological, biochemical and molecular processes which lead to changes in colour, sugar content, acidity, texture and aroma. In general, it is a physiological process which makes the fruit edible, palatable and nutritious," the FSSAI said, calling upon consumers to ensure only fruits free of hazardous chemicals are purchased.