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No more junk food in Kerala schools

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KOCHI: In a major initiative to promote healthy food habits among children at school, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) – an autonomous body established under the central ministry of health & family welfare – has come up a new directive to ban the sale of junk foods in and around schools as part of its ‘Eat Right’ campaign.

In the draft regulation –titled Food Safety and Standards (Safe Food and healthy diets for School Children) Regulations 2019 – FSSAI proposed a 10-point charter to clamp down on unhealthy eating habits of students. The charter said foods which are referred to as foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) cannot be sold to school children in canteens, mess, hostel or shops within a 50m radius.

Foods – referred to as high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) –that cannot be sold to students in school canteens, mess halls, hostels or within a 50m radius of the campus:

**FOOD
INTAKE
CURBS**



	Sweet 100g	Chole bhature 1 plate	French fries 100g	Burger 100g	Fried chips 100g	Pizza 100g	Samosa medium	Noodles 1 plate	Gulab jamun large	Soft drinks 100g
Calories	535	522	312	295	293	266	262	188	149	41
Fat(g)	30	20	15	14	15	10	17	3	7	0
Sodium (mg)	79	75	210	414	457	598	423	861	44	4
Carbs (g)	59	72	32	24	37	33	24	27	20	11

**Daily intake:
How much does a child need?**

CALORIES
Age 4 to 13: **1,400-2,000**
14 to 18: **2,000-2,400**

SODIUM
Less than 2,300mg

FAT: For a boy aged 7-10: **77g** 11-14: **86g** (including 27g of saturated fat)
For a girl aged 7-10: **68g** 11-14yrs: **72g** (23g of saturated fat)

CARBOHYDRATES
Varies from **175g to 250g**, depending on age, activity level, and overall health

FSSAI recommendations

- Mealtimes should be mandatory and it should inculcate healthy eating habits
- Safe drinking water should be provided free of cost
- School menu should have cereal-protein combination and a micronutrient-rich meal. Use whole grains, millets, milk, egg
- Fresh, seasonal, local produce should be utilized to make meals. Desserts, packed foods & bakery products must be consumed in moderation
- Cooking oil/ghee shouldn't exceed 25g/day. Avoid use of reheated fats and oils
- Snacks should provide 100-150kcal/serving, while the meals must provide 300-500kcal of energy, 18-20g of proteins & micronutrients from fruits, vegetables or fortified staples

What should be served in schools*

CEREALS, MILLETS AND PULSES: Whole wheat grain (atta, rice), millets (ragi, bajra), legumes

MILK, MILK PRODUCTS, EGG, MEAT AND FISH: Low-fat, toned or reconstituted milk, curd, yoghurt, paneer, low-fat milk products, lean meat, chicken, fish, egg

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: 300g of vegetables (green leafy ones: 50g; others: 200g; roots and tubers: 50g)/day. Fresh fruits: 100g/day.

OILS, FATS, NUTS AND OILSEEDS: Walnuts, almonds, pistachios, roasted nuts without salt or sugar

PROCESSED, COOKED FOOD: Fresh soup, porridge, beverages with no added sugar, stir-fried vegetables

SNACKS: Boiled, baked or steamed items, cereal or pulses-based savouries such as idli, upma, poha, khandvi, dhokla, etc

*As per FSSAI. Text: Preetu Nair



FSSAI also directed state food authorities/departments of school education to frame healthy diet for students in accordance with the points mentioned in the notification

FSSAI said the availability of HFSS foods like french fries, fried chips, samosa, chola bhatura, gulab jamun, sugar sweetened carbonated or non-carbonated beverages, ready-to-eat food, noodles, pizzas, burgers, confectionery items, sugar and sugar-based products should be discouraged.

FSSAI also directed state food authorities/departments of school education to frame healthy diet for students in accordance with the points mentioned in the notification. It asked the state-level advisory committee to form a subcommittee to monitor the implementation of regulations and ensure inspections.

But, a senior official said the food safety department has not received an official communication from FSSAI. "Once we get a formal directive, we will be bound to implement

the same. Schools too will have to take steps to follow regulations. The state, being one of the first to implement restrictions on tobacco near school campus, will take proactive steps in this regard,” he said. Food safety commissioner Rathan Kelkar, who is away on training, was unavailable for comments.

The charter also stated the advertising of HFSS food products in school premises or within a 50m radius will not be permitted. “Food business operators (FBO) should not market, sell, or give low-nutrition foods anywhere on school campus,” it said.

It added that schools will no longer get sponsorship for events from FBOs so that they can’t use their logos on banners at field meets or issue wallpapers for school computers/canteens.

Schools or agencies selling or catering school meals under the midday meal scheme must obtain a registration or licence as specified under schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) regulations, 2011. Nutritionists, dieticians may be engaged, periodically, by schools to assist preparation of menu for children.

FSSAI has also invited suggestions and objections from stakeholders within 30 days from the publication of the draft regulations, based on which it would be finalized for implementation.