

Is your child's school an Eat Right School?

As parents, most of us are worried about our children's health and future. Ultimately, they are the ones who will create the future of our country and the planet. So how do we make sure that our children eat right?

Poor eating habits impact not only the physical, but also the mental and cognitive development of children and hence their learning outcomes. Unsafe and unhealthy food can lower their immunity and their health later in life. Schools are well poised to promote lifelong healthy habits, as students spend an average of 6-8 hours every day in schools and are strongly influenced by peers and teachers.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has put together the 'Eat Right School' programme under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to create a safe, healthy and sustainable food environment for school children through an interactive learning model. This programme is aligned with the School Health Programme under Ayushman Bharat- a healthcare programme by the Government of India- and has several interesting features.

The Eat Right School Matrix has been conceptualized by FSSAI as a monitoring and evaluation tool to assist in creating a safe and wholesome environment from childhood. This matrix is an amalgamation of the pre-requisites and desirables that each and every school must incorporate in their management and teaching practices. The matrix has three sections, which judge performance of the school based on (A) Curricular & Co-Curricular Inclusion, (B) Alignment with WASH Programme/ Swachh Vidyalaya Scheme, (C) School Health Programme and Nutrition Programmes.

There are scores attached to each section on the matrix and based on these scores, the schools are then awarded with a certificate and recognition as an Eat Right School. As of date more than 35,000 schools have been registered on the Eat Right School Portal (<https://fssai.gov.in/eatrightschool/>) and the aim is to convert them into Eat Right Schools.

Health and Wellness Teams, certified by FSSAI, have been created in schools to drive the programme. Students, teachers as well as parents can be a part of this 'Sehat Team' and engage children in various co-curricular activities about safe food, healthy and balanced diet. FSSAI has created a training module and upon

completion of the same, any student/teacher/parent can be certified as a Health & Wellness Coordinator for their schools.

Healthy eating practices are encouraged like adding fruits, healthy local and seasonal snacks (makhana, nuts, puffed rice, millets etc.) and healthy beverages (water, coconut water, lassi, nimbu paani etc.) and green leafy vegetables in tiffin.

A school that fulfills the given set of criteria as defined in the matrix will be recognised for its efforts through the Eat Right School certification by FSSAI.

Several resources have been created to support schools to carry out this programme.

(I) The Yellow Books I & II: These resource books are developed specifically for school children from grades 1-8 with age appropriate and scientifically credible content on healthy habits. These are available in 11 languages (English, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Bengali & Assamese) on www.fssai.gov.in/eatrightschool. The English



“ The key objective of the Eat Right School programme is to create an enabling environment in schools so that children can have access to safe and healthy food. The Food Authority has recently finalized Food Safety and Standards (Safe Food and healthy diets for School Children) Regulations, 2019 that will ensure nourishing and wholesome food to the school children by not allowing any food item that is high in fat, salt and sugar, to be sold and advertised within school premises as well as in an area within 50 meters radius of the school gates. Each school will have a certified Health and Wellness Coordinator and will be supervised regularly by the State/ Municipal Authorities.”

- Arun Singh, Chief Executive Officer, FSSAI, New Delhi



version is also available on DIKSHA - National Teacher's Platform, created by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) for teachers across India.

(II) Training Manual: A teacher training manual has also been developed to give an in-depth understanding of the concepts on food safety and nutrition. This content can be integrated into the curriculum used for Teacher Training programmes. Using the content, a network of Master Trainers has been created to disseminate training programmes across India. This manual comprising of 7 modules has been designed to provide guidelines to trainers, who have undergone formal training/degree in Home Science, Food Science, Food Technology and Nutrition. The basic objective of this manual is to revise the core concepts and principles underlying nutrition, hygiene, and food safety. The trainer in turn will teach students the significance of safe wholesome food and its relation to health in their day to day life by inculcating the principles underlying health, hygiene and nutrition. It is proposing a 360 degree approach to food safety and healthy nutrition to prevent food borne infections and diseases and for complete nutrition for citizen everywhere at all time in India.

(III) Activity Book: A fun-filled activity book has been designed to teach and reinforce the message of safe and nutritious food. Along with these, many activities are hosted on the website www.fssai.gov.in/

eatrightschool.org. For example, children can put glitter on their hand and touch various surfaces to see the spread of germs. These activities may be a part of teaching the concepts of food safety, hygiene and nutrition.

(IV) Lesson Plan Booklet for class 3-10 – provide detailed information to teachers on how to teach students in a fun way to conduct different tests to check food adulteration.

(V) Eat Right School Portal: A user friendly and comprehensive online portal has been created for school registration, creation and certification of Health & Wellness teams, and access to many activities under the Eat Right School programme.

Engaging children

Going beyond the curricular scope, schools are encouraged to conduct interactive activities and games created and available in The Yellow Books and The Activity Book to learn and build right eating habits. One such large-scale activity is the Eat Right Creativity Challenge.

The Eat Right Creativity Challenge was conceptualised by FSSAI as a part of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary celebrations to inculcate healthy eating habits by unleashing the creativity of students. The challenge included a poster-making competition, wall-art and other creative showcases for students across India on themes of eating safe, eating healthy and eating sustainably.

The creativity challenge has been widely appreciated and welcomed by most schools and over 75100 students participated through 3621 schools in Phase 1 making it a huge success. The second phase of this challenge will take place from October 16 to December 16, 2020. The Challenge, this year will comprise of various competitions in two broad categories, namely- Eat Right Poster Competition and Eat Right Photography Competition and the theme of the competition is 'Eat Safe, Eat Healthy' and 'Food Safety during COVID 19'. **NS**

FSSAI team

