



Intake of sodium & trans fat risk factor for non-communicable diseases

Monday, 19 March, 2018, 08 : 00 AM [IST]

Our Bureau, New Delhi

Excessive intake of sugar, sodium and trans fats is the risk factor for non-communicable diseases (NCDs). As informed by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the per capita consumption of packaged items in India is low as compared to countries such as the United States of America.

The Government of India is implementing the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) in all the states and UTs under the National Health Mission (NHM). The objectives of the programme include inter alia awareness generation on healthy diets.

For early diagnosis, population-based prevention, control and screening for common NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension and common cancers, viz oral, breast and cervical has been initiated by the government by utilising the services of the frontline workers and health workers under the existing primary healthcare system. This process will also generate awareness on healthy diet and risk factors of common NCDs.

To address the issue of high-fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) in food and associated health risks, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) constituted an expert group. The country's apex food regulator has issued draft guidelines titled Guidelines for making available Wholesome, Nutritious, Safe and Hygienic Food to School Children in India.

FSSAI has also undertaken initiatives to ensure delivery of safe, nutritious and healthy food for all citizens by an integrated approach through its Safe and Nutritious Food (SNF) campaign, covering home, school, work place and eating out.

Under these initiatives, the regulator is bringing out different series of booklets, pamphlets and flyers to impart consumer education and raise awareness. Teachers are also being trained to promote healthy diets among children at schools.

A healthy lifestyle booklet has been developed for school children. It was jointly released by the ministers of health and family welfare and human resource development (HRD). Over 5,00,000 copies have been distributed to the states for dissemination of information.

FSSAI IN NEWS

The HRD ministry is implementing the national programme of Mid-Day Meals in schools with the objective to improve the nutritional status of children studying in Classes I–VIII in government and government-aided schools, special training centres (STCs) and madrasas and maqtabas supported under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

This was stated by Anupriya Patel, minister of state for health and family welfare in a written reply in the Lok Sabha recently.

New catering policy
The Catering Policy, 2017 was issued to provide pure and healthy food to passengers on trains. As per the new policy, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC) was mandated to carry out the unbundling by creating a distinction primarily between food preparation and food distribution on trains.

In order to upgrade the quality of food preparation, IRCTC is to set up new kitchens and upgrade the existing ones.

Further, detailed instructions and guidelines have been issued to the Zonal Railways for conducting joint inspections by the medical, commercial and concerned infrastructure maintenance departments to inspect each and every catering unit (mobile and static), including base kitchens or cell kitchens on all Railway divisions and zones.

Apart from this, regular and surprise inspections will be conducted by food safety officers (FSOs), designated officers (DOs) and joint food safety commissioners.

A joint team of ticket checking staff and Railway Protection Force (RPF)/Government Railway Police (GRP) staff also conduct surprise checks to prevent unauthorised vending on stations and trains.

The general managers of the Zonal Railways have been requested to monitor such drives personally. Food samples collected by FSOs are sent to the nominated accredited laboratories for testing and analysis, as stipulated by the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

Penalties are imposed in cases of detection of unsatisfactory food samples and prosecutions are carried out as per the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Regulations, 2011.

This information was given by the Rajen Gohain, minister of state for railways, Government of India, in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha.