

Business Standard

FSSAI launches initiative to address Vitamin D deficiency

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Monday launched 'Project Dhoop', an initiative aimed at shifting the school assembly time to noon to ensure maximum absorption of Vitamin D in students through natural sunlight.

The project was launched at National Bal Bhavan here, and saw participation of around 600 students from NCERT, NDMC and North MCD Schools.

FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal said the schools across the country have been sent two advisories asking them to hold daily assembly between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m..

"Project Dhoop's Noon Assembly is an innovative and effective concept to ensure that school students get adequate Vitamin D through sunlight, while also opting to choose food products like milk and edible oils that are fortified with Vitamins A and D," he said.

The concerns among parents about assembly at noon would be addressed properly, he added.

Agarwal also said that opting for fortified foods (with +F symbol) was a simple and inexpensive way to address micronutrient deficiencies "without any radical change in behaviour or eating patterns".

Both fortified milk and fortified edible oil are now readily available across the country, he added. The initiative has been conceptualised by McCannHealth and supported by Kwality (Ltd).

Studies have shown that over 90 per cent of boys and girls across the country were deficient in Vitamin D while the number ranged between 90-97 per cent for school children in Delhi, said Kabir Basu Roy, Chief Marketing Officer of Kwality.

"It was this knowledge that led us to fortify many of our products with Vitamin D and other essential nutrients," a release quoted him as saying.