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FDA to undertake school campaign on 'eating right'

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Nashik: The Nashik Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will undertake an awareness campaign, involving 5,000 schools and junior colleges across the district, about "Eating Right" habits of students. The campaign will start in June (the new academic year) and continue till the end of December. Under this campaign, both private and government institutions have to carry out multiple tasks to ensure that students get nutritious food in their mid-day meals in government schools and canteens of private schools.

This campaign is being undertaken on the instructions of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), functioning under the union ministry of health and family welfare. With this initiative, the agency wants to tackle the problem of obesity and food poisoning among students.

"FSSAI wants all educational institutes to ensure that food made available to students either through canteens or by mid-day meals is prepared in hygienic conditions. There are cases where preparation of food is not carried out in hygienic manner. Moreover junk food that which increase obesity among students should not be provided," joint commissioner (food) of Nashik FDA Chandrashekhar Salunke said on Tuesday.

Educational institutes have to undertake several measures like formation of a health panel involving representatives of teachers and parents that would prepare a menu, organise workshops, maintain and verify checklists about food preparation of food.

"School authorities and parents must keep in mind that junk food contains High Fat, High Sugar, High Salt (HFSS). Its regular consumption may leads to various health problems in adolescent age group," food safety officer Sagar Perkar said. The FDA is in the process of writing to all schools and junior colleges of the district to adhere to the guidelines issued by the FSSAI.

"We will be visiting educational institutes at regular intervals to get feedback about the compliance of the guidelines. Those institutes that achieve complete compliance would be issued certificates. And those who fail would be slapped with show-cause notices," a FDA official said. The FSSAI has also directed the FDA officials to undertake surprise inspections at the educational institutes to check whether the schools are following the guidelines issued by the agency.