

Junking fast food: On norms against food rich in fat, sugar and salt

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Enforcement is key in preventing school children from accessing unhealthy food

In a welcome step, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has notified a draft regulation aimed at prohibiting the sale and advertisement of food rich in fat, sugar and salt to schoolchildren inside the **school** premises and within 50 m around it.

It comes in response to the 2015 order from the Delhi High Court directing the central agency to frame norms to promote healthy diets in schools. Besides prohibiting the sale of junk food, the FSSAI requires schools to simultaneously encourage and promote a safe and balanced diet. In a bid to shield the children from consuming unhealthy food items and snacks, the FSSAI prohibits food companies that manufacture such items from advertising or offering for free such foods in school premises and within 50 m of the campus.

To thwart food companies from luring children to consume foods rich in fat, sugar and salt, the companies are prohibited from using their logos, brand names and product names on books and other educational materials, as well as on school property such as buildings, buses, and athletic fields. As a general guidance to provide wholesome food, the agency recommends the use of a combination of whole grains, milk, eggs, and millets; it also listed a set of general guidelines for selection of food products that can be offered in schools.