

Experts demand rollout of strict front packaging norms at the earliest

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New Delhi: In view of the increasing threat of non-communicable diseases among children due to intake on high amount of salt, fat and sugar contents in packaged foods, the doctors as well as experts have asked the Food Safety Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) to implement package levelling norms at earliest.

Citing scientific researches, the experts have stated that excessive intake of salt, fat and sugar contents in packaged food products is becoming a major cause of cancer, heart diseases and liver diseases.

Consumer rights activist and columnist Pushpa Girimaji said, "To protect the interest of citizens, food items with high salt, sugar and fat should be introduced with colour coding or any other easily understandable warning labels.

While addressing a webinar, Dr Sunila Garg, who heads Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine (IAPSM), said, "Everyone has the right to have a better health and health of younger generation is the wealth of the nation. So, it is a must for state and central governments to put warning labels on top of the front of packaging of food products."

Experts from the Pediatric and Adolescent Nutrition Society and Epidemiology Foundation of India have said that the food industry wants to delay the system of such warnings for its own benefit and they the industry is trying to ensure that the rules are not strict.

Citing research findings, Neha Khandpour, professor of public health at the Centre for Nutrition at the University of So Paulo, Brazil, stressed that such warnings have been found to be most effective in informing consumers and influencing their decisions as people are able to select better products on the basis of such warnings.

"There has been a rapid increase in the use of food products that cause sickness. In the coming decades, India will also join the obesity-prone countries like Britain and America. The rules are to be made mandatory, else industry wouldn't follow it," said Arun Gupta, who is convener of Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPI), at a webinar organised by BPNI.