

## Parents initiate signature campaign to ban junk food in schools

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While FDA in Thane has adopted measures to exempt junk food from school canteens, parents are waiting for the FSSAI's proposal for the complete ban on the advertisement and sale of potato wafers, soft drinks and other junk foods in school canteens and within the 50 meters radius of the school campus.

To further push FSSAI, the parents have initiated a signature campaign from the schools across the city. This will then be submitted to the various organisations like FDA, FSSAI and School Education Department. "It is essential to stop the sale of junk food items near the school premises. With less physical exercise for children, nowadays, it is essential to curb consumption of junk food," said RJ Rajput, principal, MH High School, Thane.

Although as per the new policies of the FDA in Thane, wherein no school or college canteen will serve junk or food high in sugar and saturated fats; there has been an increase in the number of students getting home-cooked lunch during school hours.

"Many schools have encouraged consumption of fruits or dry fruits for a small break in school. This has been a boon for many parents, but children often use their pocket money to buy junk food sold outside school premises. Children crave for unhealthy food items like

pasta, pizza, or fried items after they watch the advertisements,” added Asha Shetty, parent of 12-year-old Parth Shetty.

While efforts to convert school campus into ‘Eat Right Schools’ are being made, a special committee will be formed to monitor the provisions available for safe, healthy and wholesome meals in schools. “A similar initiative should also be made to provide safe, healthy and wholesome food outside school premises. It is mostly peer pressure or the temptation that draws children towards junk food. However, if students are well fed at home or in school then they will not look for other options,” said Fatma Sheikh, nutritionist, Kausa.