

Banned stapler pins on your tea bags? FDA is waiting for your complaint

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Says can't act unless it receives complaints, has no manpower to conduct checks itself. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) banned the usage of stapler pins in tea bags and sent a circular saying so in July 2017



A loose staple pin could be consumed and cause serious health issues. Pic/Sneha Kharabe

Despite the ban on the use of stapler pins in tea bags in 2017, manufacturers continue to use them widely. Yet, the Maharashtra Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) has no case of any violations. That's because, officials claimed, they haven't received any complaints regarding this and don't have the manpower to conduct inspections at night, when many tea sellers who use such tea bags, go about their business.

No Complaints, Staff Shortage

Speaking to mid-day, Pallavi Darade, FDA commissioner said, "So far, we haven't received any complaint from people regarding it. If we do, then we can certainly look into it." Another officer said the FDA office is reeling under a staff crunch, because of which they can't even hold regular inspections to find violators. "Most tea sellers who use tea bags do their business at night, so we need to keep an eye on them. But, sadly, we don't have the staff strength to conduct these inspections. Regarding private companies using them, we need to get complaints, which we haven't yet," the officer added.

FSSAI's Ban

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) banned the usage of stapler pins in tea bags and sent a circular saying so in July 2017. The use of staple pins in tea bags is a hazard to consumers, since any loose staple pin consumed inadvertently with tea may cause serious health issues. The pins are made of steel coated with zinc but are also known to be made of galvanised iron coated with zinc. "Taking cognisance of the risk to public safety in using staple pins in tea bags by some FBOs, the Food Authority in exercise of the power

conferred under Section 16 (5) of FSS Act, 2006, hereby directs the concerned FBOs to discontinue the manufacture, storage, distribution, sale, and import of stapled tea bags by January 1, 2018," reads the circular. The commissioners of Food Safety of all States/UTs were directed to take necessary action to prevent the usage of unsafe packaging material and take up measures for enforcement of this direction from January 1, 2018.

Doctors Caution

Doctors have cautioned consumers that usage of such pins in tea bags can even prove deadly if one gets mixed in the tea and is consumed. "In the past, there have been incidents where people have swallowed stapler pins. As these pins are also made of iron coated by zinc, it may prove harmful to the stomach's internal lining. It may cause bleeding and even poisoning," said Dr Rasheed Sheikh, a general physician.

2017

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