

'Eat right' campaign: FDA to improve food quality at school, college canteens

The campaign, whose ambassador will be actor Rajkummar Rao, will begin by June, said FDA Commissioner Pallavi Darade. The campaign aims to reduce excessive consumption of salt, fats and sugar that have escalated lifestyle diseases like obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure.

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The campaign's ambassador will be actor Rajkummar Rao

(Written by Siddhant Mallik)

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Friday launched a campaign, 'Eat Right', which aims on improving the quality of food provided by canteens and caterers in schools and colleges across Maharashtra. The campaign, whose ambassador will be actor Rajkummar Rao, will begin by June, said FDA Commissioner Pallavi Darade.

The campaign aims to reduce excessive consumption of salt, fats and sugar that have escalated lifestyle diseases like obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. The FDA will share guidelines of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the National Institution of Nutrition (NIN) on promoting healthy food habits with schools and colleges.

"Children are not the best judges when it comes to food choices. Benefits of balanced, fresh and traditional foods cannot be substituted," Darade said.

FDA officials said that low cost and aggressive marketing has increased the sale of junk food in school and college canteens. The campaign was initiated after surveys conducted by the NIN and World Health Organization (WHO) found high number of children (aged less than 13) diagnosed with cardio-vascular diseases.

As per FSSAI guidelines, between October and November, principals and college food committees across the state should organise workshops for students and parents. Sensitisation should also be done for students whose home cooked food has high content of salt, fat and sugar. The guidelines mandate schools and colleges that successfully implement the FDA directives must be issued certificate for compliance. The guidelines also direct joint commissioners and food inspectors to conduct surprise visits to check catering centres.

As part of the campaign, guidelines, which are divided into activities and tasks, have to be achieved by schools in a given duration. Each school has to form a committee of parents, students, teachers and catering officials to determine the food menu in compliance with FDA guidelines. The school has to execute the new menu by August. Food safety officers and health coordinators will visit educational institutes for inspection every two months.