

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:350
ANSWERED ON:07.07.2004
HARMFUL INGREDIENTS IN FOOD ITEMS
Baitha Shri Kailash

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the recent revelation of the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology that food items like Ketchup, instant noodles, chocolates, orange coloured drinks etc. contain harmful additives that can cause childhood asthma;
- (b) if so, whether the Government has made any scientific analysis of the indigenously manufactured food items to ascertain how far these items are safe for consumption particularly by children;
- (c) if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the measures taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

(a) According to Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) the intolerance to food additives used to enhance taste, provide colour or increase the shelf-life can trigger wheezing or an asthma attack. As per the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, food sensitivity affects 1-2 percent adults and about 8 percent children under the age of six. Common sources of allergy are artificial colours tartrazine and sunset yellow that give food its yellow and orange colour; flavour-enhancer monosodium glutamate that is added to instant noodles and chips; preservatives such as benzoates that are added to fruit juices, jams and sauces, and emulsifiers added to chocolate and ketchup that prevent the oil and water components from separating.

(b) & (c) In view of the limited information on the subject in India, the ICMR supported a project on identification of food allergy based on history and immunological parameters and also to confirm this with skin tests. Preliminary analysis of this project data shows that out of the 1200 patients participating in the study in Delhi 782 (65.1%) persons gave history of allergy to one or more food items. However, skin prick test showed 144 out of 327 patients to be sensitive to one or more food items. In view of the high level of discrepancy in history and skin test, oral food challenge to the reported allergic food is being carried out to confirm the allergy. The study is likely to be concluded shortly.

(d) The use of food additives is regulated under Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954/Rules 1955. The food additives are allowed in food items in limits which are considered safe. Based on scientific studies or published literatures the use of additives in food is reviewed from time to time.