

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RESEARCH**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3421
TO BE ANSWERED ON 7TH AUGUST, 2026**

IMPACT OF ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS

3421. SHRI VE VAITHILINGAM:

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

- (a) the details of the Government's position on recent studies indicating that ultra-processed foods may exhibit addiction-like behavioural characteristics comparable to those associated with tobacco products and other habit-forming substances;
- (b) the scientific studies, expert consultations and health-risk assessments undertaken by the Government regarding the relationship between ultra-processed food consumption and obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, mental-health concerns and other non-communicable disorders;
- (c) the initiatives envisaged by the Government to improve public awareness, nutritional literacy and consumer understanding of the risks associated and excessive intake of ultra-processed foods, particularly among children and adolescents;
- (d) the regulatory arrangements presently available for product labelling, advertising practices, marketing restrictions and the disclosure of nutritional content relating to ultra-processed foods; and
- (e) the measures contemplated by the Government for reducing dependency risks, encouraging healthier dietary behaviour and strengthening preventive public-health interventions across the country?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(SHRI PRATAPRAO JADHAV)**

(a) and (b): Based on the available global scientific evidence, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has indicated that higher consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPFs) is associated with a higher risk of adverse health outcomes, including overweight and obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, as well as the mental disorders. These conditions are multifactorial in origin, and high consumption of UPFs is considered one of several modifiable risk factors. Moreover, the available evidence is largely observational and does not, by itself, establish causality. However, ICMR has not carried out any specific study to assess whether ultra-processed foods exhibit addiction-like behavioural characteristics comparable to those associated with tobacco products and other habit-forming substances.

(c) to (e): ICMR has further informed that it has undertaken several initiatives to create awareness on the health risks associated with excessive intake of ultra-processed foods. The Dietary Guidelines for Indians, 2024 recommend limiting free sugar intake, avoiding frequent consumption

of sugar-sweetened beverages, and minimizing intake of ultra-processed foods. The Guidelines also include dedicated guidance on identifying ultra-processed foods and reading food labels to enable informed consumer choices. ICMR also contributed to the development of model boards for the Sugar Boards initiative taken by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. To translate these recommendations into action, ICMR has launched the "Let's Fix Our Food (LFOF)" initiative in collaboration with national and international partners to improve food environments for children and adolescents. The initiative promotes healthier school food environments, develops evidence-informed communication materials and policy briefs, engages with schools, parents, youth, policymakers and civil society, and advocates measures that encourage healthier food choices while discouraging consumption of foods high in sugar, fat and salt. In addition, ICMR conducts nutrition awareness activities through public lectures, workshops, training programmes, observance of National Nutrition Month and other health campaigns, dissemination of information through media, development of nutrition education materials in regional languages to promote healthy dietary practices across different population groups.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has informed that it has undertaken the following initiatives to encourage healthy eating habits among consumers:

- i. 'Eat Right India' movement is based on three core pillars - Eat Safe, Eat Healthy and Eat Sustainable. It is a collective effort of all stakeholders to transform the food ecosystem of the country with a tagline 'Sahi Bhojan Behtar Jeevan' (Right food, Better life).
- ii. 'Aaj se Thoda Kam' campaign encourages consumers to gradually reduce their intake of fat, salt, and sugar through dietary modifications.
- iii. Through "Stop Obesity" & "Fight Obesity" campaign on social media, a range of educational and awareness contents on obesity are shared.
- iv. Testimonial clips featuring School Children, Youth, and Self-Help Group (SHG) members are posted on social media. Child-friendly animated videos are developed and published on social media to educate kids about the dangers of obesity and the value of healthy eating and regular physical activity.
- v. The quiz named 'Eat Right Quiz on Obesity' in collaboration with MyGov has been launched in April 2025 to engage people in a fun & interactive way while educating them on different aspects of obesity and healthy living.
- vi. "#HarLabelKuchKehtaHai" awareness campaign is also carried out under the 'Eat Right India' movement to empower citizens with label literacy for informed choices. It aims to educate consumers on key elements like nutritional information (calories, fats, sugars, protein, serving size), ingredient lists, allergen warnings, and date markings.

FSSAI has further informed that it has notified the quality and safety standards of various food products which are harmonized with international standards such as CODEX. The sugar, salt and fat content of the food products are regulated by FSSAI under its existing rules and regulations. FSSAI has taken following steps to regulate food product labelling and advertising practices:

- i. Notified Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020 with following major provisions:

- Pre-packaged food shall not be described or presented on any label or in any labelling in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive or is likely to create an erroneous impression regarding its character in any respect;
- Mandatorily declare nutritional information including Total fat, Added sugars, Total Sugars, Carbohydrate, protein, Energy and sodium content, along with the per-serve percentage contribution to the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) is required to be declared on the product label.
- All packaged foods are required to display the list of ingredients in descending order of their composition by weight or volume, including palm oil, preservatives, colours, and additives as applicable.

ii. Notified Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018 to regulate advertisements and claims with following major provisions:

- Advertisements and claims shall not undermine the importance of healthy lifestyles and no advertisement shall be made for food products which is deceptive to the consumers.
- Advertisements for food or beverages shall not be promoted or portrayed as a meal replacement unless otherwise specifically permitted.
- Claims must be truthful, unambiguous, meaningful, not misleading and help consumers to comprehend the information provided.
- Claims shall not state, suggest or imply that a balanced and varied diet cannot provide appropriate quantities of nutrients as required by the body.
- Where the claim benefit is related to or dependent on the method of preparation of the food the same shall be provided on the label.
- The claim that a food has certain nutritional or health attributes shall be scientifically substantiated.
- Schedule I to the said Regulations prescribes the conditions under which a nutrient or food component may be described using claims such as 'Low', 'High/Rich', 'Free', and 'Source'.
- Other types of claims not standardized under these regulations may require approval from the Food Authority and should be supported with sound scientific evidence.
- No claims shall be made which refer to the suitability of the food for use in the prevention, alleviation, treatment or cure of a disease, disorder or particular physiological condition unless specifically permitted under any other regulations made under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- There shall not appear in the label of any package, containing food for sale the words "recommended by the medical or nutrition or health professionals" or any words which imply or suggest that the food is recommended, prescribed, or approved by medical practitioners or approved for medical purpose.

Further, any deviation from the prescribed standards or violation of the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Regulations (FSSR) attracts regulatory and punitive action against the non-compliant Food Business Operators (FBOs) in accordance with the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and the rules and regulations made thereunder.
