



FACT SHEET

FOOD DYES

Today, moms pay close attention to what their kids eat. There's a lot of information out there, yet some information about food is misleading and unnecessarily frightening to shoppers.

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THE FACTS YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW:

What are Food Dyes?

- According to the Food and Drug Administration, food dyes, pigments, or other substances impart color when added or applied to a food, drug, cosmetic, or the human body.
- Food dyes can be found in a range of consumer products—from cough syrup and eyeliner to contact lenses and cereal.

The Safety Record of Food Dyes:

- According to scientists at the FDA, food dyes are safe when used properly.
- Under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, food dyes used by manufacturers are continually tested to ensure their safety.
- There's a lot of chatter online and in the media about artificial colors in food. Claims range from these dyes causing cancer to hyperactivity and other attention issues, to autism, and allergic reactions. Yet, human studies have been unreliable and inconclusive.
- One 2007 British study claimed to have made the connection between artificial food dyes and hyperactivity in children. Yet, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) later declared the study flawed because researchers made no adjustments for factors such as the participant's socioeconomic status, gender, and education. According to Keith Ayooob, director of the nutrition clinic at the Rose F. Kennedy Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, when these adjustments were made, the 3-year-olds included in the study were actually *less* hyperactive after consuming food dyes; the 8 and 9-year-olds showed greater hyperactivity only at the highest dose. Ayooob also explained that because children participating in the study were given a mixture of artificial colors and another preservative, researchers weren't able to determine which product caused the change in behavior.

Unintended Consequences of Food Dye Fears:

- Some parents, whose children are diagnosed with attention deficit disorder or another attention disorder, may react by putting their children on an elimination diet—removing items that contain even scant amounts of coloring—instead of pursuing solutions that are backed by strong scientific evidence, such as cognitive behavioral therapy or medication (or a combination of both).
- Delaying treatment in favor of unproven “solutions” for serious attention disorders can greatly impact a child’s development and educational progress.



THE REASONABLE MOM SAYS:

Practice good nutrition rules on a regular basis and limit nutritionally empty food items. Yet, allowing your kid a colorful treat once in a while isn’t going to harm them. Be reasonable in your decisions. From fast food to cupcakes to chips and cookies and ice cream—these things are best eaten on occasion but banning them entirely does nothing to set realistic nutrition standards for kids.

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