

Experts urge Amitabh Bachchan to dissociate himself from 'Horlicks'

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GSK Consumer, which has put its consumer nutrition business on the block, had said last week that Bachchan would be ambassador for its "Horlicks Mission Poshan" campaign.

NEW DELHI: GSK Consumer Healthcare's [Horlicks](#) milk food drink, which last week announced its association with actor [Amitabh Bachchan](#) to endorse the brand ahead of its stake sale, has landed in the midst of controversy.

A national-level advocacy group called Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest, has written an open letter to Bachchan asking him to withdraw the endorsement, on grounds that "Horlicks is a high-sugar product" and its claims of making children healthier are not scientifically backed. The letter, which includes comments from doctors, says: "Horlicks is a high sugar product, as 100 gram of a popularly advertised pack of Horlicks Delight contains 78 gram of carbohydrates of which 32 grams is [sucrose](#) sugar". It adds that the consumption of the product is "harmful for children as it may contribute to childhood obesity and non-communicable disease in later life."

"Going by this recommendation, promotion of Horlicks is inappropriate as they use false health claims in TV commercials," the letter says, adding that it "dents Mr Bachchan's image as a socially responsible celebrity". "I fear that this campaign may have serious adverse repercussions. Horlicks is expensive and is likely to drain pockets of marginalised families under the misbelief that Horlicks is a good nutritious product for children as it is endorsed by Mr Bachchan. Thus Horlicks may displace healthy real family home foods and this way contravenes tackling the problem of undernutrition among children," Dr Arti Maria, head of neonatology department, RML Hospital, is quoted in the letter.



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A GSK Consumer spokesperson said in a statement on Wednesday: "Horlicks has been a trusted household name for over 100 years and has been synonymous with nutrition. As a brand, we aim to address the often overlooked issue of micronutrient deficiency in children which is widely prevalent in India." A query addressed to Amitabh Bachchan's office did not elicit a response.

GSK Consumer, which has put its consumer nutrition business on the block, had said last week that Bachchan would be ambassador for its "Horlicks Mission Poshan" campaign, supporting the Government's Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyaan. A statement by GSK said the campaign is aimed at focusing on the first 1,000 days of a child and addresses the issue of malnutrition, stunting and infant mortality. The actor had spread the message through social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

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