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Public Health Experts Ask Amitabh Bachchan to dissociate with Horlicks

Sugary Solutions is a Myth for Tackling Undernutrition in India

A recent partnership between Horlicks and Network 18 rendered support to Government's "Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyaan" to curb undernutrition in India. Many people welcomed this step as they roped in Sh. Amitabh Bachchan for this purpose.

The campaign is named similar to Poshan Mission of the Government, as "Mission Poshan".

It is quite shocking to see that Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, who is a celebrity of the millennium agreed to support brand building of "Horlicks" which is a sugary product. As noted by NAPI in its letter to Mr. Bachchan, *"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."*

Undernutrition mostly creeps into the resource poor households. Says Dr. Head of Neonatology Department, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Delhi "I fear that this campaign may have serious adverse repercussions: Horlicks is expensive; is likely to drain pockets of marginalized 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."

"Amitabh Bachchan's association with "Horlicks" can be harmful. High sugar foods/beverages should be prohibited for children. Sugar has no nutritional value whatsoever and causes no feeling of satiety. Aside from being a major cause of obesity, there is increasing evidence that added sugar increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome and fatty liver", says Dr. Aseem Malhotra, a renowned British cardiologist, author of "The Pioppi Diet" and former Director of Action on Sugar, UK.

In the year 2014 Mr. Bachchan had renounced his association with Pepsi based on health implications it has on children.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a reduced daily intake of free sugars throughout the life course to less than 10% of total energy intake. Furthermore, in the interest of good health WHO suggests intake of free sugars to below 5% of total energy intake. In 2016, the World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted a Resolution 69.9 that recommends ending inappropriate promotion of foods for children from age 6–36 months based on WHO and FAO dietary guidelines.

According to Professor HPS Sachdev of Sita Ram Bhartia Institute, “This amounts to creation of a manipulative nexus, based on conflicts of interest. Celebrities should avoid lending their name and image to such products ”

According to Dr. J P Dadhich a senior pediatrician from Rohini, “Promotion of Horlicks stating that it helps kids in gaining height, weight, brain development and healthy immune system is inappropriate as these claims are scientifically unsubstantiated. This campaign is misleading and undermines optimal nutrition.

NAPi has urged Mr. Bachchan to call off this association with Horlicks in public interest and children’s health.

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