



U.S. Government Moves to Eliminate “Poisonous” Food Coloring Chemicals

For the past 50 years, American children have been living in a toxic soup of synthetic chemicals, according to Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Dr. Marty Makary. The FDA chief said this while [announcing](#) that several food colorings present in popular American foods will soon be eliminated.

The head of the agency overseeing the FDA, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., agrees with Makary’s assessment on the harm posed by said chemicals. Kennedy said in an [FDA statement](#):



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For too long, some food producers have been feeding Americans petroleum-based chemicals without their knowledge or consent. These poisonous compounds offer no nutritional benefit and pose real, measurable dangers to our children’s health and development. That era is coming to an end. We’re restoring gold-standard science, applying common sense, and beginning to earn back the public’s trust. And we’re doing it by working with industry to get these toxic dyes out of the foods our families eat every day.

What’s Being Phased Out?

The FDA plans to work with companies to eliminate eight chemical food colorings while authorizing new, natural color additives. The FDA will revoke authorization for synthetic food colorings Citrus Red No. 2 and Orange B within the coming months, as well as six synthetic dyes — FD&C Green No. 3, FD&C Red No. 40, FD&C Yellow No. 5, FD&C Yellow No. 6, FD&C Blue No. 1, and FD&C Blue No. 2 — by the end of next year, [according](#) to the FDA.

The ban will affect several common foods, snacks, and beverages. Red No. 3 is found in maraschino cherries and fruit cocktails. Red No. 40 is found in Kool-Aid, Starburst, and NyQuil. Mountain Dew and Twinkies contain Yellow No. 5, while Airheads, Jolly Ranchers and Lucky Charms have Yellow No. 6. Blue No. 1 comes in M&M’s and Takis, while Skittles and blueberry Pop-Tarts include another blue chemical, Blue No. 2.

Food companies add dyes for a number of reasons. They are often used to improve visual presentations. Relatedly, many snacks depend on very specific colors as part of their brand — Starburst, Skittles, and M&Ms, for example. Cost is also a factor. Synthetic dyes are cheaper, more stable, and longer-lasting than natural alternatives like beet juice or turmeric. Dyes are also used to hide imperfections in raw ingredients.

The problem is the chemicals are suspected of causing harm. The chemicals in question have been



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linked to allergic reactions, DNA damage and inflammation, neurobehavioral issues, and potential carcinogenic risks. Animal testing has shown links to kidney, bladder, and brain tumors. “They clearly cause behavioral problems for some — but by no means all — children, and are associated with cancer and other diseases in animal studies,” said Marion Nestle, a New York University nutrition professor.

Kennedy’s Long-standing Vision

Kennedy and Makary want companies to look at natural alternatives such as beet, watermelon, and carrot juice. The government is going to do its part to help. The FDA is fast-tracking the review of calcium phosphate, Galdieria extract blue, gardenia blue, butterfly pea flower extract, and other natural alternatives to synthetic food dyes. The FDA also announced it’s “taking steps to issue guidance and provide regulatory flexibilities to industries.”

The move is part of Kennedy’s longtime mission to flush the American diet of synthetic chemicals with no nutritional value but plenty of health risks. He has consistently attacked Big Food’s role in America’s chronic disease epidemic, a topic he is very passionate about.

Kennedy has not minced words as to how serious he believes the nation’s health crisis is. He has gone so far as to say that if the American experiment fails, the chief reason will be “because we let our country get sicker, more depressed, fatter, more infertile at an increasing rate, while crippling our national security, bankrupting our national budget with health care costs.” He has stressed that the collective health of Americans today is far worse than that of those of a half a century ago. Obesity, diabetes, ADHD, autism, cancers — all have increased significantly over the last few decades.

How Is Big Food Reacting?

The government’s plan to eliminate these dyes, so far, does not depend on official regulation. Kennedy said during the April 22 press conference announcing the move, “We don’t have an agreement, we have an understanding.” Makary seconds that. He said, “You win more bees with honey than with fire. I believe in love. Let’s start in a friendly way.”

Companies are ready to play ball, according to the HHS chief:

We’re getting food companies and fast-food companies that are calling us every day. I think the industry is ready to change. They have children too. Most of them really want to have a healthier America. They want clear guidelines and they want to know what they can and can’t do. And we’re gonna give them that.

But the International Association of Color Manufacturers, which represents the additives industry, is not as enthusiastic as Kennedy would hope. They [told](#) *Newsweek* that the proposed timeline of the end of 2026 “ignores scientific evidence and underestimates the complexity of food production.” Moreover, it claims there aren’t enough replacement alternatives. The National Confectioners Association echoed this concern, saying the industry “needs time to find safe and viable alternatives.”

Is Government Overstepping?

Evidence overwhelmingly supports Kennedy’s claims that American food is riddled with unnatural toxic ingredients. Moreover, these views aren’t exclusive to Kennedy and Makary, but are held by millions of Americans who have been concerned for decades.



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But is this an issue for the federal government?

The motivation here certainly seems well-intentioned, but what happens if a future HHS secretary goes a step further and determines Americans shouldn't eat meat or drink sodas? After all, there is evidence suggesting those are harmful as well (processed meats specifically), and there are plenty of powerful people willing to lobby for the banning of those items.

The U.S. Constitution gives zero permissions for the existence of federal agencies that dictate what people should eat. And despite the misinterpretation of past court decisions, it is hard to imagine that the authors of the Constitution would ever consider it the federal government's job to meddle in our diets.

Maybe there is a better, more constitutional approach. The people of [California](#), Virginia, and West Virginia have already taken steps to protect themselves from toxic food dyes, and, according to [reports](#), 20 other states are considering following suit. In West Virginia, Gov. Patrick Morrisey signed legislation on March 24 banning foods containing most artificial food dyes and two preservatives the FDA has labeled "generally recognized as safe." Apparently, the people of West Virginia didn't find that designation reassuring. The new law will also prohibit foods with dyes from being served in school meals starting August.

Perhaps the better solution is to abolish Health and Human Services and every single agency under its purview, and let the people of each individual state determine what's allowed on their grocery shelves.



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