

ARE FOOD COLORINGS SAFE?

If you read food labels you have no doubt noticed that food coloring is in just about every conventional product these days. (These are FD&C Blue No.1, Blue No.2, Green No. 3, Red No. 3, Red No. 40, Yellow No. 5, Yellow No. 6 and caramel coloring). You'll find them in soft drinks, teas and juices, packaged foods, frozen foods, medications, cosmetics, adult beverage mixes and more. Once upon a time natural colorings were used from natural foods and spices. But, manufacturers felt it more important to have brighter and more appealing looking foods and candies rather than the duller looking colors. Eye appeal is important for sales. Since food dyes are approved by the food and drug administration for use, should we be concerned?

According to Dr. Andrew Weil, MD, if we care about our health we should avoid food dyes. He explains that the chemicals used to create color (by reflecting light) are energetic molecules, and are capable of interacting with, and damaging, DNA. This effect on the DNA can injure the immune system and accelerate and increase our risk of cancer. Regarding the caramel color used in sodas, a food safety report released by Consumer Report in 2014 showed some types of this artificial coloring contain a potentially carcinogenic chemical called 4-methylimidazole (4-Mel). A dozen different brands out of the 81 tested contained 4-Mel, some higher than 29 micrograms per serving.

It has been petitioned to the FDA to ban food colorings because of so many findings of food dyes being linked to cancer (specifically lung cancer, liver cancer, thyroid cancer and leukemia), hyperactivity (ADHD), allergic reactions, and more. But, the colorings have yet to be banned, so it is up to us to read labels and make responsible choices for our own health. As with all food choices (fast food vs homemade, etc.), the responsibility of choice lies with us, each and every day. ♦

