

News Notes To Parents

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service of Wells County

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Making Sense of Food Colors: What Parents and Consumers Should Know

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Bright colors in cereals, cheese sauces, and candies often come from added food colorings that make products more appealing or mimic natural hues. These additives fall into two categories:

Natural colors are derived from plants, spices, insects, or algae, such as turmeric for yellow, cochineal bugs for red, and spirulina for blue-green.

Artificial dyes are lab-made, often from petroleum sources or chemical reactions, including FD&C Red No. 3, Red No. 40, and Blue No. 1.

Are Food Dyes Safe?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates all approved food dyes, setting safety margins well below harmful levels. Since 1906, U.S. law has banned poisonous or deceptive coloring. Regulations evolve as new evidence emerges. In January 2025, the FDA banned Red No. 3, requiring removal from foods by January 2027. The FDA is moving to remove Citrus Red No. 2 and Orange B and has urged voluntary removal of other synthetic dyes by 2026. Some states have passed their own restrictions, but the FDA continues to review evidence before approving or banning additives.

What about Health Risks?

One common concern is the potential for hyperactivity in kids. The limited research in this area is not conclusive that food colorings, artificial or natural, cause ADHD or make it worse. However, some parents report a difference in behavior when their children consume food colorings. If parents want to limit or avoid food colors, it may be helpful to work with a registered dietitian nutritionist to prevent unnecessary restrictions.

Food-color allergies are rare but possible. Both natural and synthetic colors, such as Tartrazine (Yellow 5) and Red 40, may trigger mild to severe reactions. People with known sensitivities should check labels carefully.

Identifying and Reducing Intake

Food colors are common in processed foods. To limit them, read ingredient lists for terms like *artificial color*, *natural color*, *color added*, or specific names (e.g., “FD&C Blue No. 1” or “colored with beet powder”). Choosing mostly whole, minimally processed foods naturally reduces intake.

FDA-approved food colors are considered safe at current usage levels. While some individuals may react to certain dyes or prefer to avoid artificial additives, the key to a healthy diet remains variety, moderation, and focusing on nutrient-rich whole foods.

Source: <https://www.eatright.org/food/planning/smart-shopping/making-sense-of-food-colors>



Source: <https://www.freeimages.com/photo/candies-1-1173446>

Smart Holiday Planning & Spending for Families with Young Children

The holidays are magical when you have little ones—but the pressure to buy more can quickly drain your wallet and energy. These tips help keep the season joyful and affordable.

Spot the Marketing Traps: Holiday ads sell moods as much as products. Before you click “buy,” ask: *Is this for our family’s enjoyment, or am I chasing the picture-perfect ad?*

Set Family Goals: Gather the kids and talk about what matters most—cozy family time, faith traditions, favorite activities. Shape your plans and spending around those priorities.

Needs vs. Wants: Needs may include travel, a few meaningful gifts, or ingredients for special meals. Wants are extra décor, pricey events, and impulse toys. Ask: *Does this support our goals?*

Create a Kid-Friendly Budget: Decide on a total amount and cut it by 30% to cover surprises. Assign limits for each child or activity. Use cash envelopes, an expense-tracking app, or even “freeze” your credit card in a container of ice to avoid overspending.

Budget Your Time: Block shopping, baking, and family nights on a calendar—including rest days. Combine tasks, like decorating while enjoying a family meal, to stay relaxed.

Avoid Post-Holiday Debt: Credit card interest can double costs. Before buying, ask: *Will this gift still matter next month?* Consider family gift exchanges, start a holiday savings account in January, shop early for deals, and always look for lower-cost alternatives.

Use What You Already Have: Repurpose decorations, wrapping, and craft supplies. Homemade ornaments or framed family photos delight kids more than store-bought extras.

Make Memories, Not Just Purchases: Let each child decorate a small space or help create gifts. Cozy traditions—reading under twinkle lights or baking cookies—build memories that last far longer than any toy.

Activity: Create a Holiday Budget Worksheet

1. List all holiday spending categories (gifts, food, events, travel, decor, etc.)
2. Write how much you spent last year
3. Set this year’s goal per category
4. Cut the total by 30%
5. Fill in your envelope system or tracker

Post-holiday reflection: What worked? What didn’t?

Source: Purdue Extension Financial Resource Management team



Source: <https://www.freeimages.com/photo/to-do-1156681>

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