

February 19, 2019

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
1515 Clay Street, 16th floor
Oakland, California 94612
Attention: Anna Smith, Food Dye Study

Submitted via <http://www.oehha.ca.gov/comments>

Re: Request for Information on the Neurologic and Neurobehavioral Impacts of Synthetic Food Dyes

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit information regarding the neurologic and neurobehavioral impacts of synthetic food dyes.

The undersigned clinicians, researchers, and health-based organizations write to urge OEHHA to:

- Assess the *cumulative risks from mixtures* of food dyes, because both children and adults are exposed to multiple synthetic food dyes contained in a single food item, as well as in multiple items that are consumed in one sitting. Reflecting this reality, most clinical trials that examined the effects of synthetic food dyes tested them in mixtures. The chemically-related class of “azo dyes”¹ (namely, Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6) represents more than 90% of all the dyes that are certified for use in food and should be considered together, as a class.
- Account for exposures to synthetic dyes from both food sources and non-food sources, including over-the-counter and prescription drugs (including two forms of Ritalin that are used to treat Attention Deficit Disorder and related disorders), dietary supplements, and cosmetics.
- Apply appropriate safety factors or other methods to compensate for data gaps as well as to account for the effects of exposures on vulnerable subpopulations of children, including sick or underweight children who are likely to be consuming synthetically dyed products (such as medications, and Pedialyte and Pediasure), children with reduced access to nutritious dye-free foods, and children who may be more

¹ Azo compounds all have a -N=N- in their chemical structure. In addition to the four azo dyes certified for use in food (Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, as well as Citrus Red, which is no longer used), consumers may be exposed to additional azo dyes in drugs and cosmetics.

susceptible to the adverse effects of dyes for genetic, preexisting health conditions, or other reasons.

The social and medical context for exposure to synthetic dyes in food is also significant. We ask OEHHA to describe the growing consensus² among researchers and healthcare providers who treat behavioral problems that avoiding food dyes can benefit some children. Despite this growing consensus, as OEHHA should acknowledge, avoiding food dyes is difficult, since food dyes are ubiquitous, they may appear in unexpected places (e.g., in condiments, white foods, brown foods), and it can be difficult or impossible for parents to monitor dye content of foods when children are at school, at restaurants, at friends' homes, or other gatherings outside the home.

Moreover, these risks and exposures are completely unnecessary: synthetic food dyes lack any health or nutritional benefits, and frequently mask the absence of or substitute for colorful "real" food ingredients such as fruit and vegetables. Companies have largely reformulated products in Europe to eliminate them (partly as a result of a law requiring a warning notice on most dyed foods), and a growing number of manufacturers, retailers, and restaurants in the U.S. have eliminated dyes, or pledged to do so, demonstrating that the dyes are not needed to make appealing foods.³

Given the lack of current, reliable assessments of the risks of dyes by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, or other authoritative agency, we look to OEHHA to conduct a thorough and objective review of the evidence.

Thank you for your efforts to protect children and families.

Sincerely,

Organizations

Brain Matterz
Carson City, NV

Center for Environmental Health
Oakland, CA

Center for Science in the Public Interest

² Lefferts, Lisa Y. [*Seeing Red: Time for Action on Food Dyes*](#). Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2016, pp. 7-12, citing three recent meta-analyses, six other reviews, and other evidence.

³ Including, for example, restaurants such as Chipotle Mexican Grill, Dunkin Donuts, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Noodles & Company, Panera Bread, Papa John's, Pizza Hut, Starbucks, Subway, and Taco Bell; manufacturers such as Campbell Soup Company, Frito-Lay (PepsiCo), General Mills, Kraft Heinz, Kellogg, Mars, Nestlé, Mars, and Schwan Food Co.; and supermarkets such as Aldi's, Trader Joe's and Whole Foods, while others, such as Kroger and Ahold-Delhaize offer private label products free from dyes.

Children's Advocacy Institute
Sacramento, CA

Consumer Federation of America

Environmental Defense Fund
New York, NY with offices in Sacramento and San Francisco, CA

Environmental Working Group
Washington, DC with offices in San Francisco, CA

Feingold Association of the United States

Natural Resources Defense Council
New York, NY with offices in San Francisco and Santa Monica, CA

Orange County Food Access Coalition
Santa Ana, CA

Physicians for Social Responsibility, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
San Francisco, CA

Public Health Institute
Oakland, CA

Science and Environmental Health Network

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Senior Health Officer Natural Resources Defense Council