

Food Dyes and Valentines

By Ben Lilliston

February 12, 2009



Just about every corner store and grocery has its Valentine's Day candy on full display this time of year. And if you take a close look at the ingredients in those candy hearts, you'll likely find a number of petroleum-derived, synthetic food dyes like Yellow No. 5 and Red No. 3. Unfortunately, many of these purely cosmetic food dyes have been linked to hyperactivity and other disturbed behavior in children by a number of recent studies.

Last year, Britain's [Food Standards Agency advised](#) the food industry to voluntarily ban the use of six common synthetic food dyes, and many food companies are following suit. For example, Mars [has removed its artificial colorings](#) from Starburst and Skittles.

To help parents who want to reduce their child's intake of synthetic food dyes, IATP launched a new Web tool today called the [BrainFoodSelector](#). The tool allows parents to search by food company, product or synthetic food dye. We also put together a [Smart Guide to Food Dyes](#) that outlines which food dyes have been approved by the [Food and Drug Administration](#), the health concerns for children and what you can do to avoid them.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) has [filed a petition](#) with the FDA calling for a ban on the use of synthetic food dyes in the United States. CSPI has also [set up a Web tool](#) where consumers can report any health reactions they may have experienced from synthetic food dyes to the FDA.

"The good news is that there are safer alternatives to synthetic food dyes and many food companies are already making the switch," said IATP's David Wallinga, M.D., in [our press release](#). "We need the food industry and U.S. government agencies to catch up with the latest science and start protecting our children. Until then, parents need to be armed with information when they go to the supermarket."