

Ban It or Dye Trying

**By Reg P. Wydeven
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Several years ago, my sister, her then two-year-old daughter and I had lunch over at my folks' house. We had BLTs with cheese puffs on the side. Pretty soon my sweet, well-behaved niece started running around the house frantically. Despite our best efforts to calm her down, she just got more hysterical. When she eventually settled down, my sister mentioned this had happened a few times before.

When she mentioned it to her pediatrician, he told her to monitor her food, keeping an eye on food dyes. Sure enough, any time my niece ingested Yellow 5, a freak-out ensued.

Apparently my sister was not alone. Last week, the Center for Science in the Public Interest approached the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to ban the use of eight artificial colorings in food because the additives may cause hyperactivity and behavior problems in some children.

The consumer advocacy group based its petition on studies conducted over the last thirty years that have shown that children's behavior can be worsened by some artificial dyes. The CSPI also cited the fact that the British government is successfully encouraging food manufacturers to switch to safer colorings.

While the FDA contemplates the ban, the CSPI asked the agency to require food manufacturers to use warning labels on foods with artificial dyes. Food manufacturers use dyes in countless foods. The dyes, which are sometimes used to simulate the color of fruits or vegetables, are particularly prevalent in the cereals, candies, sodas, and snack foods that appeal to kids. The colorings the center seeks to ban are: Yellow 5, Red 40, Blue 1, Blue 2, Green 3, Orange B, Red 3, and Yellow 6.

The FDA has historically disagreed with the belief that food additives cause childhood hyperactivity, a viewpoint shared by the European Food Safety Agency. According to the agency, color additives undergo safety reviews prior to approval for marketing and that samples of each artificial coloring are tested. The Grocery Manufacturers Association also opposes the ban.

I shudder to think what color my beloved Mountain Dew will be without its beautiful Yellow 5.